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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE GREAT SPY SYSTEM

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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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The Great Spy System;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S PROMISE TO THE PRESIDENT.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

NICK CARTER SEES THE PRESIDENT.

"Mustushimi did not leave the country when he was ordered."

"I did not believe he would do so," replied Nick Carter, for the words were directed to him, and the speaker was the President of the United States, who had sent for the detective to come to Washington at once. "He did not strike me as being the sort of man, Mr. President, who could easily be made to abandon a work to which he had devoted so much of his talents as he had to the organization of the spy system."

"He was an oily little rascal, wasn't he, Mr. Carter?"

"Decidedly so, sir."

"I thought at the time that possibly you did not give him full credit for his talents," remarked the President dryly.

"You will pardon me, sir, but it was my impression at that time that I gave him rather more credit for his possibilities than you did."

"How so?"

"I don't think, if our positions had been reversed, that I would have let up on him so easily as you did."

"It was through no consideration for him that I did so, Mr. Carter; you may be sure of that."

"Oh, I was sure enough of that at the time, sir. But all the same it appeared to me that a punishment of some kind would have been about the thing for him, then. Instead of that, you merely dismissed him and warned him to leave the country and to take his followers with him. I thought then that he would slip out of it, and what you tell me now proves that he has not gone."

"No; he didn't go."

"And he has made himself active again?"

"Decidedly so; yes."

"Along the same lines?"

"Practically the same. Of course, there is a difference. I don't think that he wishes me to guess that he has remained here. He possibly believes that I will think it is the activity of another, and that he has gone, as I ordered him to do."

"But you are sure that it is Mustushimi?"

"I haven't a doubt of it, Mr. Carter."

"You have not seen him?"

"No."

"Nor heard directly from him?"

"No."

"Then in reality you have no reason other than the one that the spy system has been continued, to think that it is Mustushimi?"

"No; but I am satisfied that it is he."

"I am also; so I think we may go ahead on that principle."

"Yes."

"Now, Mr. President, will you tell me exactly what you wish to have me do this time? There is no more mystery concerning the means that are employed for observing interviews. That one they did use, of reading lip-movement, like deaf and dumb people, in order to understand conversations that could not be heard, is an old trick, and I only wonder that I did not remember it sooner, when I had that case."

"If Mustushimi is here—and I thoroughly believe he is here—I wish you to capture him and bring him before me once more. I want one more talk with the fellow."

"I don't think he will enjoy it," said Nick, laughing.

"I don't intend that he shall."

"You will give him something to remember, this time, eh?"

"I certainly will."

"I suppose it was imperative that you should be lenient with him that other time, sir?"

"I regarded it so—yes. You see, Mr. Carter, it would have been a very easy matter to have affronted his country through him. It would have been the move of Japan to repudiate any association with his aims or connection with him. His activities would have been attributed to the opposing political party in Japan, and the government would have disclaimed any knowledge of Mustushimi's acts, and probably rightly too."

"In which Japan has borrowed another spoke from the wheel of the effete West; eh?"

The President laughed heartily.

"Even so, Mr. Carter. We have always had agitators in this country, whose activities we have repudiated—but with reason."

"You have not told me yet, Mr. President, exactly what it is you desire me to do."

"Mr. Carter, I wish you to serve your country more than me, in this matter. You can serve it best by keeping from it all knowledge of this matter. We managed to keep the other affair a secret, and I am in hopes we can do the same with this one."

"Well, sir?"

"I wish you—as I have already said—to capture Mustushimi in person, and to bring him here before me, just as you did the other time; but also, I wish you, if possible, to break up entirely the gang of spies he controls, and to so frighten them individually and collectively, that one and all of them will be glad to leave the country for good."

"It strikes me that that is rather a large contract, isn't it?"

"That is precisely why I have given it to you. I have always understood that you enjoy doing rather impossible things."

"I have not been belied there, sir."

"And so I have sent for you again."

"I am to have a sort of a roving commission, I suppose, sir?"

"Your commission is as elastic as you choose to make it. You may, or you may not, as you choose, communicate with Mr. Wilkie, and ask him to give you assistance. You may do exactly as you deem best for the interests of all concerned, always bearing in mind the one important point that I require secrecy, as far as the public is concerned."

"I understand you, sir."

"The thing is to rid ourselves of Mustushimi and his followers; and, incidentally, to make it appear to all those who wish to introduce the spy system into this country, that it is a difficult and a dangerous thing to do. Why, Mr. Carter, do you not see that if this sort of thing is not nipped in the bud at once, the time is not far off when the United States will be overrun with spies, as the countries of Europe are, now?"

"I do understand that perfectly well, sir."

"That is the end I am aiming at."

"And you think the best way to accomplish it is by discrediting their chiefs?"

"I regard it as the only way."

"It reminds me of the method that was employed by Mexico to keep anarchists out of that country," said the detective.

"How was that?"

"It was rather heroic, I suppose you will think; but it was effective."

"Tell me about it."

"It was at the time when General Hinhosa was minister of war, down there."

"Yes."

"I think it was in '94 or '95. At all events it was shortly after the activities of the anarchists in France and Spain—a year or two after Ravachol blew up the café in Paris, if you recall that incident."

"Perfectly."

"I was in the city of Mexico that year. One day I happened to call upon Hinhosa at his office in the palace, down at the Zocolo, and during a lapse in our conversation, he asked me rather abruptly:

"'Mr. Carter, do you have anarchists in your country?'

"'Do we!' I exclaimed. 'I should say so. They are a blot on our peace of mind, there.'

"'Why don't you take a lesson from us, then, as how to serve them?' he asked me.

"'Tell me about it,' I suggested. He replied:

"'Not long ago this department received advices from the court of Spain that three noted anarchists were known to have sailed from there on a certain ship, bound for this country. We were told that the ship—a tramp—on which they were passengers should arrive at Vera Cruz at about such a time, and we were advised not to permit them to land, as it was known that they were coming here to organize branches of their society.'

"'Well, sir?' I asked him.

"'When the ship arrived at Vera Cruz,' he continued, 'the anarchists were met by three officers of the Mexican army, who were disguised, of course. The officers told the men that they were sympathizers in the cause and that they had received notice of the expected arrival of those men. The story of it is that the anarchists were induced to go ashore quietly with the army officers; they were taken to the city of Orizaba on a special train that night, and they were conducted straight into the prison-yard of that city, thinking that they were on their way to a meeting of the anarchists of Mexico."

"'And you imprisoned them there?' I asked.

"'They were shot, at daylight, the next morning,' he replied quietly. I have always thought, Mr. President, that that was the very best way to convince their sympathizers that Mexico was an unsafe place for their kind."

"Undoubtedly. But that sort of method would hardly answer here, in the United States."

"No. But the same sort of methods can be used—less the bullets."

"You mean that you think they can be frightened out? I don't mean the anarchists; I refer to the spy systems?"

"I think so."

"Well, Mr. Carter, you are at liberty to employ any means you think best so long as the country itself is not held responsible—or, rather, so long as it does not appear that the country has anything to do with it."

"And Mr. President, do you realize what the best method would be for accomplishing the very end you aim at?"

"Perhaps not."

"It will be to convince them that we ourselves have a spy system that is so perfect, that they cannot hope to compete with it."

"I don't know but you are right, Mr. Carter."

"I know that I am right, sir. It is the only course that will convince them, finally."

"Then, by all means, try it."

"I shall do so, sir; and I shall begin at once."

"Then I think I may consider it as accomplished, Mr. Carter," smiled the President.

"I hope that you do not give me credit for too great talents, sir."

CHAPTER II.

NICK CARTER INVITES ASSASSINATION.

"Will you need any help from Mr. Wilkie, or from the secret service, Mr. Carter?" asked the President.

"I cannot answer that question now, sir; I do not know."

"Shall I give Mr. Wilkie my instructions about it?"

"No, sir; if you please, no. If I find that I require their assistance, I will not hesitate to ask for it, and it will be accorded me personally without a moment of hesitation."

"I have no doubt of it."

"I am on very pleasant relations with the men there, and I think it is better if you keep your own personality out of the matter, entirely."

"So do I."

"I do not think you care to have me even report to you, do you, sir?"

"No; not unless you deem it necessary."

"That is not likely to be the case. However——"

"Well?"

"I should like to know that if I do wish to see you in private for a moment, that I can get to you at any time."

"Good. I will arrange it. Let me see. Oh, I have it."

"Well, Mr. President?"

"We will use the word, 'germs,' for a countersign. It is not a word that is likely to be made use of by another. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"You have only to send the word to me verbally, by one of the attendants, or in any way you choose. I will see you at once, no matter how I am engaged."

"Thank you."

"And when you have made use of it once we will change the word to another."

"Very good, sir. Now, a few questions, if you please."

"Any that you care to ask, Mr. Carter."

"You have reason to believe that Mustushimi is now in Washington?"

"Yes."

"Why do you think so?"

"I believe that I have seen him."

"And I suppose you are still spied upon?"

"Undoubtedly; all the time."

"For any specific reason?"

"No. That other one—the one that existed when you caught Mustushimi, and I permitted him to go, has been abandoned, for the present at least. But there are other irons in their fire, although I have no definite knowledge of what they are."

"Still, from your remarks, I take it that you have made a shrewd guess."

"I have made a guess. I don't know whether it is shrewd or not."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"I had not intended to do so."

"I am sorry for that, Mr. President."

"You see, Mr. Carter, I may be entirely in the air about it. I may be all wrong. It is a pure and simple guess; but all the same I have thought of it as a possibility."

"I wish you would tell me exactly what you mean, sir."

"Do you remember that in that other case, the spies often picked up information which was of no direct value to them, or to their employers, and that when they did so, the news was given out so that it would be made public?"

"Yes."

"That was done, in that case, for the purpose of mystifying us, and, if possible, to frighten us."

"Yes."

"Well, it has occurred to me that they have thought of another outlet for their superfluous information; one that is possibly remunerative."

"I don't think I understand you—quite."

"Just now the railroad legislation is creating considerable agitation, as you know."

"Yes."

"And the big operators are more or less frightened by what may be done to curb them. You understand all that, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Well, let us suppose a case, then."

"Yes, sir."

"Suppose that Mustushimi *is* working this affair, as I think he is; suppose he has decided to shield his activities behind some local employment—or the appearance of one?"

"Great, Mr. President!"

"What is more natural than that he should apply to one of the big railroad men and should say to him something like this: 'I am in a position to get you all the information you require. I am in a position to tell you, beforehand, all that the government intends to try to do in regard to railroad legislation. I will give you that information for a price, and you need not pay me until the goods are delivered. Do you think that there is one of the railroads that would not jump at the opportunity?"

"No."

"Well, Mr. Carter, that is the guess I have made which I hesitated to confide in you, only because it is nothing more than a guess. But my own opinion is that the activities of Japan, through Baron Mustushimi, are as great now as they were when you took that other case, but that now the crafty fellow is hiding himself and his men behind a local employment of some kind, and is prepared to make it appear, in case he is discovered, that the other information he gets—that which is of real use to him—is only the side issue, and that he is really employed by the railroads, the coal barons, the packers, the oil interests, or by some local industry which might be interested in spying upon the government."

"Mr. President, you have hit the nail squarely on the head, there."

"I have thought it likely."

"It is the gist of the whole thing, sir."

"I am glad that you agree with me, although of course I am sorry to think that my own countrymen should deem it necessary to undertake such a thing as spying upon the government."

"Men will do strange things where their pockets are concerned."

"Or their ambitions—yes."

"I don't suppose, Mr. President, that private conversations of yours have been reported, of late, have they?"

"Not in the manner they were before, Mr. Carter; but some of them have been reported. Of course, now that I am wise as to what was done before, I am careful not to talk where my face can be seen through a window—of course I am careful to refrain from conversations with others when I am where the motion of my lips may be observed; but you must understand that such occasions do arise, in spite of me."

"Yes."

"And so I am convinced, as I have said before, that it is Mustushimi who is behind it."

"And you have seen him?"

"I think so."

"Are there as many Japs hanging around the city as formerly?"

"I don't think so; not nearly."

"Mustushimi confessed to me, that other time, that he had two thousand of them in the country; and that there were two hundred or more in this city alone."

"Is it not possible that he has found the employment of men of other nationalities to be advisable, now?" asked the President.

"I was just thinking of that; yes, sir, it is."

"I think that you will find that to be the explanation, Mr. Carter."

"Are there any final instructions that you would like to give me, sir?"

"I can think of nothing more now."

"Does anybody know that you sent for me?"

"No. I wrote the letter myself, and dropped it into a box with my own hand."

"But of course I was seen to come here. If Mustushimi's system is anything like as perfect as it was before, he already knows that I am here."

"That, Mr. Carter, is why I showed some surprise when you came here so openly."

"I did it purposely, Mr. President."

"Why?"

"Because I guessed at once why you wished to see me, although you did not mention it in your letter—*and* be-

cause, now that I see I was right, I want Mustushimi to *know* that I am on his trail."

"That strikes me as being a new method of pursuing a secret investigation."

"It is, in one sense. But this case is different from any other."

"How so?"

"If Mustushimi has remained here, and we are practically certain that he has done so, he has hedged himself around with safeguards so perfectly that it would be difficult, if not next to impossible, to get a trace of him by ordinary methods. If he did not suspect that I was here after him, he would simply remain under cover as he is doing now, taking no extra precautions. But if he believes that I am after him, he will undertake some extra precautions at once, for he holds me in wholesome respect, and it is by those very precautions that I will be able to get first trace of him."

"That is an original way to look at it. Perhaps you are right. But what do you suppose he will do, in the way of taking extra precautions?"

"I think he will try to put me out of the way," said the detective, smiling.

"Do you mean that he will attempt to assassinate you?"

"Exactly that."

"And that you purposely invite such a thing?"

"Certainly."

"But, Mr. Carter, isn't that rather foolhardy?"

"No; I don't think so. My object is to get him to show his hand. If his system is as perfect as we think it is, he knows already that I am here, and that I am holding an interview with you. He fears me, as he fears nobody else. He has had a taste of what I can do to him. I hope this does not sound like egotism. I don't mean it so."

"Not at all."

"And therefore, since I am here again, he will guess at once that you have suspected his presence and have sent for me, and he will figure it out that the only way to be safe is to get rid of me."

"But will he dare to attempt to assassinate you in the streets, or——"

"No. He will figure out to have me killed, so that my death will appear to be accidental."

"You speak of it as coolly as if you were referring to a third party."

"I am—in a sense; for he will not succeed. Forewarned is forearmed, you see. And it will be through just such an attempt as I have outlined to you, that I will be most likely to get directly upon Mustushimi's track."

"You are a strange fellow, Mr. Carter."

"Not so strange, perhaps, as you suppose. I only try to put myself in the place of the other fellow when I can, and look at what is happening from his point of view."

"All right, Mr. Carter. Conduct the matter as you please. I know that you will be successful; and that is all we desire."

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER CONVEYS AN IMPORTANT SIGNAL.

The interview, as recorded, took place in the early evening, for the detective had arrived in Washington at six o'clock, and had repaired at once to the Arlington Hotel, where he registered and took a room under his own name, and where he made no effort at all to conceal his identity.

After that, he had taken dinner, and then, a little before eight, repaired to the White House, where the President was awaiting him.

It was half-past nine when he came out again, and walked slowly across Lafayette Square toward the hotel: and he was not surprised—in fact, he smiled rather broadly—when he noticed at once that he was followed.

As he issued from the White House grounds, he noticed that a man was loitering near the east end of the square, and another near the western end of it. Still another had been on the White House side of the avenue and had started to walk rapidly in his direction, the instant he appeared; and through the trees in the square, he could see that there was still another, while he had not a doubt that there was one or two more around him somewhere, ready to take up the trail if they should be called upon to do so.

"Mustushimi does me too much honor," he murmured to himself. "He has probably put his best men onto me already. Good!"

He continued on his way across the square, as if he was entirely unobservant of these things, but he was keenly on the alert all the time lest one of the spies should approach too close to him, and that he did not desire; for it would be an easy matter, in such a case, for one of them to stick a knife into him, or fire a bullet into his body, or attack him in some manner, before he could have an opportunity to defend himself.

But the paths across Lafayette Square are wide, and well lighted, and he could see in all directions almost as plainly as if he had been on the avenue itself; and the men who were keeping him in view remained at a respectful distance—and so, presently, he passed into the entrance of the hotel and seated himself in the office of it, having lighted a cigar.

And then, across the floor from toward the desk, there approached a certain senator from the West* who had been active in that other case to which reference was made in his talk with the President—the senator whose

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No 562.

identity Nick had assumed for a time in order the better to work out his case at that time.

"Hello, Carter," he said, dropping into a chair near the detective, after shaking hands. "I happened to see your name on the register, and asked if it was indeed you. Finding that I was not mistaken, I have waited to see you."

"That is kind of you, senator," replied the detective.

"Fact is, I really wished to see you, Carter."

"Yes? That is kinder still."

"I wonder if I would be trespassing on private grounds if I asked why you are here, Mr. Carter? I don't want to be impertinent, but if it happens to be anything about that other affair in which we were actually interested——"

"I am assured, senator, that I may rely upon your discretion, so I will admit that it is."

"I guessed it, Carter."

"Did you? Why?"

"Because I happen to know that Mustushimi is still in the city of Washington."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes."

"What makes you so sure?"

"I have seen him."

"When?"

"Not an hour ago; in fact, only a few minutes before I discovered your name on the register of this hotel."

"That was rather an odd coincidence, senator," said the detective dryly.

"Yes; if it was a coincidence—which I am inclined to doubt."

"Why?"

"Because it struck me that my seeing him and hearing of your presence at the same time would argue that he was around this neighborhood because he had been told of your arrival."

"I think there is no doubt of that. Where did you see him?"

"I almost ran into him directly in front of the Lafayette Square opera house."

"At what time, if you can tell me exactly?"

"An hour and a quarter ago."

The detective nodded. He knew that it was at the time when he was with the President.

"The fact is, Carter," continued the senator, "the sight of him brought you to my mind, and I came over here at once, purposely to ascertain if you were in town, if I could do so. I saw your name on the register, and then I remained here until your return to warn you."

"To warn me of what, senator?"

"I think that fellow would put you out of business if he had half a chance, and you may be sure that he will seek the chance."

"I haven't any doubt of that."

"I hope you'll be on your guard, Carter."

"I shall try to be so."

"And, of course, if there is anything that I can do to assist you, you can command me at any time. You know that."

"Yes. Senator?"

"Well?"

"Don't you think that you stand in some danger from Mustushimi, yourself?"

"I have never thought much about it, to tell the truth."

"If you saw and recognized him in front of the opera-house, it is safe to say that he also saw and recognized you."

"Without doubt."

"And realized that you had recognized him."

"Possibly."

"And therefore set one of his men upon you to follow you and ascertain where you went. Consequently he knew that you came here, looked at the register, found my name, and then composed yourself to await my arrival, in order that you might tell me what you knew."

"Well?"

"Also, that at this very moment, somewhere around here, he or one of his men is watching us, and one of his lip-reading experts is probably at this moment studying everything that I say."

"And what I say, as well, eh?" laughed the senator.

"Doubtless."

"Pardon me, Carter, but you are seated facing that window, exactly as if you *wished* the spies of that man to know what you are talking about."

"I do."

"Eh?"

"I am taking this method of warning Mustushimi that I am here after him, and that I am going to get him, too. I am taking this opportunity to send word to him, through his spy who is now reading from the motion of my lips all that I am saying, that I have no doubt that he will attempt to assassinate me in some manner so that it will appear to be an accident, but he must remember that I was not brought into the world to be put to death by such as he."

"Upon my word, Carter, you are strange to-night!"

"No. I am sending a message to Mustushimi. Out yonder, at the opposite side of Connecticut Avenue, there stands a man who looks like a Frenchman, who is one of Mustushimi's spies. He reads what I am saying now and he is getting nervous. He is only a common scoundrel, and coward at that——"

Nick broke off into a hearty laugh, and the senator stared.

"What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"I was laughing at the fellow over there—the one I referred to."

"What did he do?"

"When he found that I was talking to *him* instead of to you—for that is what I was doing—he got madder and madder, and when I told him he was a coward, he shook his fist at me."

"At least, Carter, you will know him the next time you see him."

"Oh, I am not so sure of that. He is a chameleon who can change his appearance as well as his colors. A scoundrel like that, who will serve under any flag, isn't fit to live. But as you say, I think I will know him again—in fact, senator, now that I think of it, I believe that I will have an opportunity to see him close by, and to talk with him, too, presently."

"You do? How?"

"I will tell you that a little later, senator."

"Is he there yet?"

"Yes."

"I should think he would go away now that he knows he has been discovered."

"Oh, no; he knows that he would have ample time to escape, if I should leave my chair to go over there after him. He is bound to stay there as long as he can read, from the movement of my lips, what I am saying."

"But how are you going to catch him so that you can talk with him, as you suggested?"

"As I said before, I will tell you that later on. Now, let us return to yourself. We were discussing yourself a moment ago, weren't we?"

"Yes."

"I was referring to the fact that you stand in some danger, senator. I think I am correct about it too. It would be well for you to be constantly on your guard, sir."

"Oh, I am always more or less on my guard. I am not afraid."

"I know that. I merely wished to warn you."

"I was brought up in the West when it was a wild place, Carter. I have been used to danger all my life. I have faced death a great many times, and I am not going to run away from a parcel of little brown men, now."

"No; I don't think you are one of that kind."

"Besides, it is a long—a lifetime habit of mine to go around prepared."

"That is a good idea, especially under the present circumstances."

All this time Nick was looking out of the window, watching closely everything that was occurring on the opposite side of the street where he had discovered the spy standing, and watching him.

For the reader knows that Nick Carter went everywhere, prepared for all things that might happen.

The letter he had received from the President, while it had explained nothing, had nevertheless informed the detective at once what he was called to Washington for; and he had gone there prepared to take up the case in his own way.

And just at that moment, when he seemed to become somewhat abstracted, and did not pay the strict attention to the senator that he had been doing, it was because he saw one of his assistants come around the corner near the drug-store and slowly approach the spot where the spy was standing.

It was Patsy, and Patsy was ready to obey any signal that his chief might choose to convey to him—for Patsy was one of three who had accompanied Nick Carter to Washington that day, coming, however, secretly, so that no one save themselves might understand that Nick had brought any one with him.

And now when Patsy appeared around the corner and approached the spot where the spy was standing, the detective leaned back in his chair and raised his arms three times over his head.

It was his signal to Patsy.

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER'S PERFECT PLANS.

"One would suppose that you were signaling to the spy," said the senator, watching him.

"I was signaling, but not to the spy," replied the detective.

"To whom, then?"

"To one of my assistants, senator." Nick was now shading his lips with one hand so that what he was saying could not be read.

"Do you mean that one of your assistants is over there, near the spy?" asked the senator.

"Yes."

"I begin to understand you now."

"Surely."

"You brought him here secretly, I suppose."

"Yes; he and two others. They are all busy, right now, doing part of the work that is required of them."

"It was a happy thought when you did that, Carter. One of your assistants is a Jap, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Is that one here, too, to assist you?"

"No. However faithful to me Ten-Ichi is, I would not ask him to work against his own people. I left him in New York."

"But you said you had three assistants with you."

"So I have. But one of them—Danny—has not been promoted to that position just yet, so far as the title is concerned. He is really my chauffeur; but he is a good lad for all that and quite capable of doing good work. I brought Chick, Patsy, and Danny; and right now, senator, Patsy is approaching that fellow over there. Please don't turn your head to look."

"I won't. You may tell me about it."

"Patsy has ordered a carriage to drive around and up against the curb, directly in front of where the spy is standing. The carriage is approaching now."

"Yes."

"Now it pulls up at the curb; and now——" The detective turned his chair so that he no longer faced the window, and he added:

"In about half an hour, senator, we will take a walk together, and interview that spy; that is, if you care to accompany me."

"I should say I do care, Carter. What a fellow you are. But tell me what happened over there. You know I was seated so that I could not see, and you would not permit me to turn."

"No. I didn't think it best, at the moment."

"Tell me what happened, won't you?"

"Certainly. A carriage drove around the corner toward the spot where the spy was standing at the same moment that Patsy approached the man on foot. Inside the carriage was either one of the other of my men, Chick or Danny."

"Yes."

"When the carriage was near enough to the spy, the door of it swung open, and the instant it did so, Patsy acted."

"What did he do?"

"He hit Mr. Spy a clip behind the ear with his fist, and in such a manner that he sent the man reeling straight into the open door of the carriage. When the fellow pitched through the door, Chick, or Danny—the one who was in the carriage, waiting—seized him and pulled him inside. Then he closed the door, and the carriage instantly drove away, while Patsy calmly remained where he was."

"It all sounds very simple, Carter."

The detective laughed aloud.

"Such things are simple, when you know exactly how to do them and have the nerve to carry them out," he said. "My men possess both accomplishments."

"Suppose a policeman had been standing near, and had happened to see the whole thing."

"That is precisely why Patsy remained behind," explained the detective.

"Eh? I don't understand."

"If questions were asked, Patsy was there to explain—and to show his authority, if necessary."

"I see."

"And he remained there, also, to observe what the other spies would do when this one disappeared. There are as many as half a dozen around us, right now."

"If that is so, one or more of them will follow the carriage, don't you think so?"

"Probably."

"You speak as if that is what you wished to have happen."

"It is."

"I cannot pretend to understand you, Carter."

"You will understand as we proceed with the case. Just now it is not necessary that you should do so."

"Nevertheless, I wish you would do me the favor to explain."

"When I was sent for to come here—and I was sent for, as you know—I realized that the only way in which I could hope to succeed quickly would be to force the other fellow's hand, so I adopted this means of doing it."

"What means?"

"I came here in the open. I purposely arranged so that Mustushimi would know at once of my arrival. I believed that if I did that, he would open the ball at once and not wait for me to do it. I knew that he would instantly place half a dozen or more spies on my trail, and that my best course would be in capturing one of them and forcing the man to tell me all he knew. And so I laid my plans accordingly."

"But if they follow and know where you take the man?"

"If they do that, it will doubtless end in my capturing more than one. My dear senator, I have prearranged a nice little trap for Baron Mustushimi to walk into. I shouldn't wonder if I had the good luck to catch the man himself, as well as some of his underlings."

"Gee! I hope so."

"Senator, there are times when you make use of surprisingly undignified language for a senator of the United States."

"Oh, bother that! I am a plain Westerner, Carter, and I never wear the toga of a senator outside the chamber."

"I think that is one of the reasons why I like you so much."

"I say, Carter."

"Well?"

"Of course you know where your man has taken his prisoner?"

"Of course."

"And you are going there, presently?"

"I just now told you that."

"I hope you haven't forgotten that you promised to take me with you."

"No; I have not forgotten."

"Won't we be followed, too, when we leave here?"

"It is more than likely. I hope so."

"It looks as if we might get a little fun out of this thing before we are through."

"It does, certainly."

"Do you have an idea that they will attempt any of that assassination business to-night?"

"They are likely to attempt it at any moment. It would not surprise me if a bullet should come through this window at us, at any moment."

The senator moved back a little and the detective laughed.

"Do you think they are such poor marksmen that they couldn't hit you, sitting there in full view?" asked the senator.

"No. That is not what I think."

"What then?"

"I have got to take the chance. I always take chances, senator. We have to do so in my business. I did not mean to say that I really think they would dare to shoot through the window at us, but that they might do so. The chances are that they will not. But it wouldn't do for me to appear as if I feared it: Besides, I have a wholesome belief in my own luck."

"I guess there is no doubt of that."

"There isn't."

"How long have you been in the city, Carter?"

"Since about five o'clock."

"And you have made all these arrangements since that time, besides doing the other things you had to do?"

"The arrangements were easy, for you must remember that Washington is an old stamping-ground of mine. I had only to tell my assistants what to do—and I did that before we left New York. Then I went on about my business. They did not come here on the same train that I did."

"I don't suppose you will want to use me again, will you, as you did before?"

"No, senator, it will not be necessary this time. I shall work out the case in another way entirely."

"How soon are you going to start out to see that captured spy?"

"In a few minutes more. I wish to give all the other parties plenty of time."

"To arrange for the assassination?" asked the senator, grimly.

"To arrange for the attempt at it—if they dare such a thing. But I have made my plans carefully, senator. I don't think you need fear the outcome of them."

"Oh, I don't. Not in the least."

"But you are getting impatient; eh?"

"Yes. I admit it."

"Curb your impatience, then. We will start presently. Before we go I wish to tell you something."

"Well?"

"I do so more to kill time than anything else."

"Yes."

"I knew, of course, when I was sent for, that it must be this same man Mustushimi I would be up against. I knew him to be a master at his trade, although personally a coward, and, physically, of no account whatever. I had him handicapped at the start by knowing that he is afraid of me."

"That is a sure thing."

"So I figured it out whatever I accomplished against him must be done in a hurry, or he would find a way to get away from me. If I should consume two or three days in trying to capture him, he would have ample time to lay his plans to outwit me somehow, and while I might get many of his men, and might break up his present organization, I would not get him. And he is the root and stem of the whole thing."

"Of course."

"So I figured it out to draw his fire at once. To force him into the open, so to speak, at the very beginning, believing, as I now do believe, that I can get my claws upon him before the light of another day; and knowing, as I think I know, that if I do not succeed in doing that, he will somehow elude me, personally. The case won't be worth a cent unless I capture the man himself. Do you understand now?"

"Yes. I think so."

"I made up my mind, when I took the train for Washington, that Baron Mustushimi should be my prisoner before morning. Now, let us see how well I calculated."

"Good! I'm with you. Are you ready?"

"Yes. Come on."

CHAPTER V.

NICK CARTER'S STRATEGIC PREPARATIONS.

As they stepped down from the entrance to the hotel upon the pavement, the detective said to the senator:

"You must have your nerve with you now."

"That is all right, Carter. I've got it. I always take it with me," was the quiet reply.

"I am purposely seeking to be followed. That is part of my present object, senator."

"I understand that."

"And at any moment we may be attacked from behind. Do you realize that?"

"Yes."

"Or be shot at from behind, which is worse."

"It isn't pleasant to contemplate, but all the same it is

not the first time in my life when I have been in that predicament."

"I have no doubt of that."

"How far do we walk?"

"Approximately, two miles. In other words, to A Street northeast."

"Near the Capitol?"

"Not very far from it."

"Do we go to a house there?"

"Yes; there is a house there which I am making use of for this occasion. There is another one behind it which fronts upon the avenue. The two come almost together at the rear. I shall make use of both houses before we finish."

"I begin to guess at your plans a little."

"Possibly."

They turned east through H Street, but at Fourteenth they turned south to the avenue.

"This will be rather nearer," said the detective, "and, besides, you will be in less danger, senator."

"Are you considering me only, in this?" asked the statesman.

"I am certainly considering you. I don't want a dead or a wounded senator on my hands, to-night."

"It would make you a lot of bother, wouldn't it, Carter?" chuckled the senator.

"Yes. And annoy me as well. Now, have you noticed that we are followed?"

"No; and although I haven't exactly looked backward, I have been trying to discover if we were followed. I haven't done so yet."

"Did you notice those two men walking ahead of us, who continued on down H Street, when we turned into 14th.

"Yes."

"They were part of the system. They will turn down 13th or 12th to the avenue. There are others behind us, to follow."

"May I look back?"

"Certainly."

"You don't care, then, if they know that you are onto them?"

"Not in the least. This is a case where I am playing in the open, and where my men are doing the secret work."

"I see four men following us," said the senator, after a moment. "Two are on this side of the street, and two are on the opposite side."

"And two more have gone around another way, while it is safe to say that there are at least two others somewhere else, ready to take up the trail or to lend a hand at any moment."

"They certainly do the thing up brown, Carter; placing eight men on our trail."

"Mustushimi realizes that he has got to get me to-night, or never."

They turned into Pennsylvania Avenue.

"They will hardly attempt it here," said the senator. "There are too many men along the avenue."

"Oh, I don't think they will attempt it at all until later in the night. They would infinitely prefer to trail us to some house, and then break into it. They are aware that one of their spies has mysteriously disappeared, and they suspect that I have somehow captured him, even if they do not know it. If they saw the fellow that Patsy hit, when he was knocked down and saw him taken away in the carriage, they have had difficulty in locating the place to which he was taken, and now they are relying upon us to take them there."

"I see. And that is precisely what you are doing."

"It is what I *appear* to be doing."

"Then you are not going there?"

"Yes."

"You are too complicated for me, Carter. I don't understand what you mean."

"I have already said that there are two houses there, haven't I?"

"Yes."

"One fronting on the street, and the other on the avenue."

"Yes; with the rear end of them almost together."

"Well, when Patsy hit the spy, Danny—who was probably the one who was in the carriage—grabbed him, pulled him inside, closed the door, and the carriage drove away. It went straight to the house in A Street. Understand that?"

"Perfectly."

"Chick would be waiting there for it to arrive, for it was previously arranged that we were to capture one of the spies, no matter which one, and that the man was to be taken there. See that?"

"Yes."

"Well, the carriage would drive up directly to the house in question, in A Street, and without a single attempt to avoid being followed. Chick, watching for its

arrival, would rush out and help Danny carry the man inside—and the driver would go on about his business."

"Well?"

"When Chick and Danny got the man inside the house, if he was unconscious, they let him remain so, and if he was not, they made him so."

"With chloroform; eh?"

"Probably."

"And then——"

"Then they carried him through to the house in the avenue——"

"Oh! I see!"

"No, you do not. Wait a minute."

"Well."

"They would carry him through to the house on the avenue, and *out of it again*——"

"By the front door! I see, I see!"

"Where the carriage they had left in front of the other house would already be in waiting."

"Jingo! What a plan!"

"And then Mr. Spy would be taken by one of the lads straight to another place, where I intend to interview him presently."

"Then you are not going to the house in A Street now?"

"Yes, I am. I want to convince those who are following us that that house is our headquarters for this affair."

"While all the time the man they seek, the man you took prisoner, is somewhere else, where they cannot find him."

"Exactly."

"Then of what further use to you is the house in A Street, and the one behind it, as well?"

"That is where I propose to make my final capture."

"Carter, this is better than a play at a theater. You have arranged it all so splendidly that it is precisely of that sort, you know. But the thing that puzzles me most, is how you could have arranged those houses for your purposes, at such short notice—and still have another house to which you could take your prisoner."

"All that is merely accidental," replied the detective.

"Accidental? How so?"

"I have been making some investments in real estate lately," replied the detective, "and I happened to purchase those two houses some time ago. They were in frightful repair, so that I was obliged to rip them practically to pieces, before I could hope to get tenants to take them."

"I see. And now they are in process of repair; eh?"

"No. They are finished, but have not been let, as yet. I remembered that fact when I saw the necessity of having some such place to go to on this trip here, and wired ahead to the agent that I did not want them shown any more until after I had inspected them. Then I instructed one of my assistants to obtain the keys, and to make the other arrangements that I wished attended to. It will help you to understand how all this has been possible when I tell you that Chick has been in the city since six o'clock this morning."

"I am beginning to understand you now."

"The house that backs up against the one in A Street is a mansion. It is a very fine residence, and I have made it an elegant one. Among other things, I have installed a complete wiring of electricity. I may make some use of that before morning. I don't know."

"But I say, Carter?"

"Well?"

"If your prisoner is not here—at the house in A Street—why are you going there now?"

"Because one of my assistants is there, awaiting me, and I want to hear his report. Also because he was followed there, and those who followed him doubtless believe that their captured friend is a prisoner inside. Because the house may have been approached already, by some of Mustushimi's spies. Because it is necessary that I should go there before I attempt to interview the captured spy—and, finally, because it is there, in one of those houses, where I expect to bring all this affair to a climax, and I wish to be assured, by personal examination, that everything is in readiness."

They were well down the avenue now, toward the Capitol, and when they arrived at the Capitol grounds, instead of crossing them, they swung around the corner and walked up B Street.

All the while they were trailed by the men who had followed them from the hotel; and the detective noticed that the "shadows" seemed to take very little pains to conceal the fact that they were on the track.

This pleased him, for it told of overconfidence on the part of Mustushimi, who could not be far off himself, since this affair was of the utmost importance to him.

The capture of his spy had assured him that Nick Carter had come there prepared to meet him on his own grounds, and made him think that Nick was taking the

initiative at once, as he really was, although in reality he was forcing Mustushimi to do the same.

It was a battle in the open, this one, and Nick Carter, at least, was enjoying it hugely.

As they swung around the corner toward A Street, at the east side of the Capitol grounds, the detective said to his companion:

"Now, senator, when we approach the house, be ready."

"For what?"

"For anything that may happen."

"What do you think is likely to happen, Carter?"

"That is impossible to tell, but it is not unlikely that they will try to rush us at the moment when we attempt to enter the house. The street will be practically deserted at this hour, and there is no telling what they will seek to do. Be ready."

"I'll be ready. Don't fear about me, Carter."

And then they approached the house together.

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER'S NARROW ESCAPE FROM A KNIFE.

They turned through the gateway in front of the house almost together, for Nick forced the senator a little in advance of him as they arrived at it, and then pushed him forward, for already he had heard the patter of running feet on the pavement behind him, and knew because of the sound that some person was running on his toes, in order to approach as silently as possible.

As the detective pushed the senator forward he turned himself to face the approaching foe; and just as he did so, saw the man raise his arm as if to throw something.

Nick dodged, for he suspected what it was, and at that instant the gleam of a knife-blade, as it whizzed past him, told him that a knife had been thrown.

But the detective had prepared himself for an emergency of this sort, for he knew—or, rather, had known—that he would not wish to shoot, and that, nevertheless, he would be likely to need some weapon that he could throw.

And now, as the man raised his arm again, to cast the second knife—knife-throwers always carry a pair of them—the detective drew back his own hand quickly and let fly a small stone which was one of several he had put into his pockets for the purpose.

And the pebble—it was scarcely more than that—went true to its aim; it struck the man fairly in the middle of his forehead, so that he fell like a stricken bullock, and the knife he had been about to hurl clattered to the brick pavement noisily.

Instantly the detective turned, and, seizing the senator by the arm, hurried him up the steps of the house.

Neither of them ran, but they almost did so; and even as they reached the top of the steps the spiteful crack of a pistol told them that their enemies were determined.

But the door was opened for them when they reached it, and they sprang inside, whereupon it was instantly closed again, and in the light of the hall Chick stood facing them smilingly.

"Rather a close call, wasn't it?" he asked calmly.

"It's all right," replied Nick instantly. "Neither of us were touched, although if I had not turned at the right moment one of us would have had a knife in our flesh, somewhere."

"How many are out there?" asked Chick.

"Six, at least; probably more, Chick," was the reply.

"Where is Patsy?"

"Oh, he is chasing our own trailers along, somewhere, keeping tabs. He will show up at the right moment. Who was that in the hack, when the spy was captured? You, or Danny?"

"Danny. I was waiting here. He said that Patsy gave him a nice one, and I reckon he did, for the fellow only came around to his senses after we got him here, in the house."

"You took him away again, didn't you?"

"Certainly. According to orders. He is over in the southwest section by this time."

"That is as it should be. Who is with him?"

"I told Danny to stay there. I did not think we would need him here."

"Quite right. Have the spies attempted to get into this house, since the man was brought here?"

"Have they? They have made all sorts of excuses, and at last they threatened. And just now, a moment before you appeared, I think they were contemplating rushing the door," replied Chick, with a grin.

"Good!" ejaculated the detective. "We will make ready for them, and then they can rush it as soon as they please—that is, if you have perfected all the arrangements I told you to fix," he added.

"Everything is ready," said the assistant.

"Did you call upon Major Sylvester, at police headquarters, as well?"

"Sure."

"And he agreed?"

"Yes. He was a trifle slow about it at first. Said it wasn't exactly right to leave the street unguarded even for a little while, when there would be such a row going on, but I assured him that nobody would be in any danger but ourselves, and that we could take care of that part of it. I finally succeeded in assuring him that it was really for the good of the nation that you should have your way for to-night, and he consented at last that there should not be a cop within blocks of here after ten o'clock. I assumed all the responsibility."

"Good!" said the detective. Then he turned to the senator and explained.

"You see, senator," he said, "I wanted things arranged so that Mustushimi would have a free hand for to-night. I wanted this part of the street left unguarded, so that finding it so, they would not hesitate to resort to extreme measures; and that is what they will do. By the way, Chick, let me introduce you. This is 'The senator from the West.' That is the only name we know him by, for the present."

"That is enough for me," said Chick, grasping his hand. "I have heard all about you, sir, from my chief, who has told me about that other affair."

"Let me understand things," said the senator, turning to Nick again. "Do you mean that the chief of police has withdrawn the regular police guard from this part of the street, for to-night?"

"For the first part of the night—yes."

"But why?"

"So that Mustushimi may discover that no police are near him. He will send out his men to find out about that. If there was a policeman in the way, he would doubtless attack him. But, finding none, he will assume that the officer has left his post without leave, and will go ahead with his own plans, leaving a guard to watch for the arrival of the officer."

"And what will he attempt to do, do you think?"

"He means to get inside this house, if he can do it; by force, if it cannot be accomplished in any other way."

"But what for? How will it benefit him to get in here?"

"He wants to recapture his spy, before that spy has a chance to make a full confession to me; but more than that, he wants to capture *me*."

"I see."

"And now he knows that I am here—more than that, he knows that you are with me, and I have no doubt that he has suddenly discovered that you are about as dangerous to him as I am."

"Hardly that."

"He will be likely to think so, at any rate."

"There are no noises outside the house now."

"No."

"What do you suppose they are doing?"

"Reconnoitering."

"Eh? For what?"

"Looking to see if there is danger of interruption by the police. By the way, Chick, have you got anybody in the other house, to keep guard there?"

"Yes. I've got Gordon, of the secret service. I ran across him this morning. He said he had a day off, and I told him something of our plans. He volunteered to assist me, and I took him up. He is over there now, in the other house, keeping watch out of the front windows."

"Good. I think you had better go over there, Chick. It would not be surprising if Mustushimi tumbled to the fact that there are two houses in this affair. He is smart enough to guess that, when he remembers how closely the two streets come together right here."

"I think he has suspected it already."

"Do you? Why?"

"He has posted two men in front of it. He is in doubt, however, and won't attempt any breaking in on that side until he is certain. It wouldn't do for him to disturb peaceable citizens, and you could never tell from the outside that the house is unoccupied."

"I see. Well, go over there and find out what Gordon has to say, and when you have done that, return here."

As soon as Chick departed, the senator, who was insatiable with his questions, turned to the detective again.

"I am worried about that other assistant of yours," he said.

"Who? Patsy?"

"Yes."

"What about him?"

"Well, so far as I was able to determine, the city of Washington is just about swarming with spies in the service of that scoundrel Mustushimi, and if some of them saw your man Patsy strike the spy whom you caught, isn't it just possible that they have taken after him, and captured him?"

"Patsy isn't an easy mark for people of that sort," replied the detective, smiling.

"Granted; but all the same there are so many of them that Patsy might have fallen into their hands, you know."

"I don't think so, senator."

"Where do you suppose he is now?"

"Outside there, somewhere."

"What? Among those fellows who are about to attack us?"

"No; but keeping watch over them. Don't worry about Patsy. He knows how to take care of himself as well as anybody I ever knew. He'll turn up all right, at the moment when he is least expected, and therefore probably will be the most wanted."

"Carter, do you really think that those fellows will have the nerve to attack this house while we are in it?"

"I do."

"What are you going to do to defend it?"

"Nothing at all."

"What?"

"Nothing at all. I am almost inclined to leave the door open for them to enter, only if I did that it would make them suspicious."

"Do you mean that you are going to let them get inside without offering any resistance?"

"Yes."

"Why, for goodness' sake?"

"Because they will discover all the resistance they will care to meet after they have entered."

"Oh! You mean to fix yourself to fight them, then, eh?"

"I don't really think we will have to do any fighting at all, senator."

"I suppose you have prepared another puzzle for me to solve, eh?"

"Not necessarily. Do you remember that when I was telling you about these two houses, I told you that I had had the other one wired thoroughly for electricity?"

"Yes. What has that to do with it?"

"I will tell you. When I thought of using these houses, I naturally remembered that fact about the wiring, for it has just been done. When I remembered that, it reminded me of something that I did years ago, in my house in New York."

"What was that?"

"There was a band of thirteen men who had formed together and taken a solemn oath to do me up; to murder me, in short. Well, I got onto their schemes, and I managed to find out what night had been fixed upon when they intended to visit my house in a body, storm it, and either kill me, or take me prisoner to kill me afterward. I had just had that house fitted with electricity at the time, and I went to the power-house and induced them to help me—with the result that I bagged the whole lot of them with electricity. Caught every last one of them."

"By shocking them, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"And is that what you have fixed up here?"

"Something very like it—as you shall see."

CHAPTER VII.

NICK CARTER'S BOLD DEFIANCE.

"Would you mind telling me how you are going to do it?" asked the senator.

"Not at all, since there seems to be plenty of time."

"I confess that I am curious to hear."

"I thought of the plan last night before I started Chick off to come here in advance of me. I told him exactly what to do. He was to visit the electric company which supplies the light and power here, and get them to assist him, after which it was a mere question of his being able to secure help enough to do the wiring before the time set when all must be in readiness."

"Well?"

"He got the consent of the company, and he evidently found the men, for he has told me that everything is in readiness."

"So you know what has been done, the same as if you had seen to it all yourself, eh?"

"Precisely."

"What *has* been done?"

"Step out here a moment, and I will show you."

Nick took the senator into the hallway, and pointed toward the balustrade that ascended beside the stairs.

"Don't you notice," he said, "that there is a strip of metal lying along the top of the rail?"

"Yes."

"Look closer, and you will see that there is also a strip of insulation beneath it, to protect the woodwork."

"I see it."

"Well, every place in the house where a stranger, upon entering, would be likely to rest his hand, is wired and insulated in just that manner—for those strips of metal are what you might call flat wires; no?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Now you must understand that the other house—the one back of this one—is protected in the same manner."

"But——"

"Wait a moment, senator."

"All right."

"There is a wire run into each of the houses, which brings in the strong current that operates the arc-lights of the street. Have you gotten onto that?"

"Yes; but won't it kill a man?"

"It might; but I haven't finished explaining yet."

"Go on, then."

"There is a switchboard arranged with resistance-coils, in the front room of the second floor of each house, and from either of those switchboards I can turn on whatever amount of current I please. If you were standing here, holding to this rail, and I were at the switchboard, I could give you enough of a shock to knock you galley west, or I could give you just enough to astonish and frighten you, as I happened to wish to do. See?"

"Jingo, but that's great!"

"I believed that I could induce these men of Mustushimi's, or, at least, enough of them to make it worth while, to attack me in this house, and to force an entrance here. I laid my plans to that effect before I left New York. I even had Chick cause a notice to appear in the *Star* to-night, that Nick Carter was in town on an important case, connected with a certain Japanese gentleman who had once been ordered out of the country. You may be sure that some of his associates saw that, and called his attention to it."

"You seem to have forgotten nothing, Carter."

"One must remember things when one is in my business."

"I suppose so."

"Of course, when I started out, and when I ordered all these arrangements made, there was no certainty in my mind that my expectations would be fulfilled; but I made sure to be prepared for the moment if it came, or if I could bring it about."

"I see."

"And now you understand why I have purposely kept myself in plain sight, all along; why I chose to sit at the window over there at the hotel, and talk so that the spy across the street could read what I was saying, from the motion of my lips."

"Yes. But that spy was the one captured by Patsy. He has had no chance to report what he saw you say, at that time."

"Don't think he was the only one who was watching me. I haven't a doubt that the chief himself was watching me at the time. I figured that he was."

"You seem to have figured the thing out pretty carefully, Carter."

"I have. I had to do so, if I wished to be successful. I have promised the President that I would deliver Mustushimi to him in person, and I want to do it to-morrow morning."

"Suppose that the chief himself does not enter the house? Suppose he leaves that part of the work for his followers to do."

"In that case we will have to force those we do catch to tell us where to find their chief—and with the aid of the electricity it can be done. There is nothing in the world of which an ordinary man stands in such deadly fear as of electricity; and in the case of fellows like these, who know very little about it, they will think that they are going to be eletrocuted offhand."

"It will be funny, I have no doubt."

"Funny! You wait!"

"But I don't see yet just how you are going to catch them. When you shock one, the others will turn and run."

"Not a bit of it. They wont have a chance to do that."

"Why not?"

"Because I shall not deliver the shock until they are all pretty nearly where I want to get them, and whoever has his hand on one of those strips of metal will keep it there; you can bet your life on that."

"You mean that they won't be able to let go?"

"Yes."

"Hark!" exclaimed the senator. "What was that?"

"It is Chick returning from the other house. Wait here and keep a watch on the windows, and I will go and meet him."

"What shall I do if I see that an attack is about to be made?"

"Just call out to me, that is all."

The detective descended to the basement then, and met Chick, who was returning from the other house.

"Well?" he asked of him.

"There are seven of them outside the other house," explained Chick. "Gordon thinks that they have somehow tumbled to the idea that we are using both of the houses, and it is his idea that they mean to attack them both at the same time."

"It is my idea, also. It has been so all the time. Mustushimi is far too smart to be taken in by appearances."

"Then how shall we divide our forces?"

"You will remain there with Gordon. I will keep the senator here with me."

"Do you think you can depend upon him if it comes to a fight—if the wires should fail to work, or anything like that?"

"Yes, I do. He is all wool and a yard wide, that man, and he isn't afraid of anything."

"I like him, Nick."

"So do I. Now, get back with Gordon, and remember to wait until you have nearly all of them, if they do get inside, before you turn on the current. Will you be careful?"

"You bet I will."

"We ought to gather in quite a bunch of them before the night is over, Chick."

"And we will, too. The only thing I'm afraid of is that Mustushimi himself will not get caught. According to all that you have told me, he is a crafty scoundrel, and he may hang back."

"I don't think there is any doubt of it. But if he does, we will follow him, no matter where he goes. I've got to take him to the White House in the morning."

"You didn't promise as soon as that, did you?"

"No; but I want to do it, just the same."

"By the way, Nick, there is a supply of ropes and things to tie them with after they are caught. I put the whole outfit in the front room where the switchboard is located."

"All right. Have you got another supply in the other house?"

"Sure thing."

"All right again. Go back there now."

When the detective returned to the senator, he found the statesman looking through his peep-hole at the window, evidently in some excitement, and he approached and laid his hand upon the senator's shoulder.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"They are coming, Carter."

"I thought it was almost time they made a move."

"They have got a lot of wood, or a beam, or something very like one. I think they are going to use it to smash down the door."

"Without doubt."

"Won't the people in the other houses on the street raise a row, Nick?"

"They will probably all telephone to the police that a terrible riot is going on here, but by the time Major Sylvester thinks it wise to get here all the affair that we are particular about will be over and done with."

"One would suppose, Carter, that you knew beforehand exactly what these fellows would do."

"I do, almost. Given an idea, and a number of men to carry it out, and you can usually figure rather closely what they will do; and, as in a case of this kind, you can lead them to do almost what you wish them to do, if you are accustomed to handling such men."

"It is perfectly amazing to me, Carter."

"I suppose so. Let me get to that window a moment. Where are the men with the battering-ram now?"

"Just at the bottom of the steps. They will be at the door in another moment."

Nick stepped forward, and threw open the window; but as he did so he stepped quickly back again, out of sight, thinking that perhaps a shot might be fired at him.

But none was; and after a second he called out, still keeping his person screened:

"What are you men doing there?"

The men who carried the improvised battering-ram paused for an instant, and then from beyond them a voice replied:

"We wish to speak to Nick Carter."

Nick, who recognized the voice of Mustushimi, replied instantly:

"I am he. What do you want?"

"I am the Baron Mustushimi, and——"

"I knew that, baron. Go on."

"You have one of my men in that house, and I want him at once. Will you deliver him over to me and save yourself great trouble?"

"I have no such man here as you describe."

"That is not true."

"Well, anyhow, I will not deliver such a man to you."

"Then take the consequences. Forward, men! Smash in the door!"

CHAPTER VIII.

NICK CARTER WORKS THE SWITCHBOARD.

It seems an incredible tale that such a thing as that one described could happen within the city of Washington, but often the very boldness of a lawless proceeding is its principal safeguard, and that seemed to be the rule in this case.

Of course, we must understand that Mustushimi had placed his scouts out, to warn him of the possible approach of the police, and naturally he had investigated to discover if any were in the immediate neighborhood before he made the concerted attack.

But, even then, the thing could not have occurred without police interference had not Nick Carter in a measure prepared for it, as has been already outlined.

It may seem strange to the reader that he should voluntarily cut off from himself all chance of police assistance until after a certain hour; but Nick had plotted to capture as many of the members of the spy system as possible, and he realized that his only means of success existed in the possibility of inducing them to enter one of the houses that he had prepared for their reception.

The real genius of his plan existed in the foresight he had used in calculating so exactly, as he had, that he could entice them there to make the attack; but we must remember that Nick Carter had passed all his life in the study of just such characters as he was pitted against now, and, like the hunter who stalks the deer, or the lesser one who seeks the hare, he knew just what courses they would take under given conditions.

He knew now, as he peered through the window toward them, that the crucial moment had arrived; that the attack was already upon him, and that now he had to depend upon the correctness with which his instructions had been carried out, for the success of his plans.

"Come!" he called to the senator; and he sprang back from the window, and led the way up the stairs to the second floor of the house, where, as we know, the switchboard of the electric apparatus had been installed.

The front door, which was to receive the first force of the attack, was not barred against the intruders.

Nick knew that the very first blow of the improvised battering-ram against it would force it open; and he intended that it should be so. In that case, there would be no breakage, save that of the latch.

As he dashed up the stairs, having forced the senator to go before him, he wondered if the chief of the spies had bethought himself far enough to have planned a concerted attack on each of the houses.

The two men reached the second floor before the ram touched the street door; and then the detective said to the senator:

"Now, my friend, here is the place where you can assist me, and where you will have a chance to make use of some of that nerve of yours."

"As I told you before," replied the senator, "I brought it with me."

"Good! I don't doubt it."

"What do you wish me to do? Give your orders, and I will obey them."

"You are to stand here, at the bottom of the second flight of stairs, where you can look over the balustrade at the advancing men, but without being too plainly seen yourself."

"Yes."

"Keep out of sight as much as possible, and be careful not to draw a chance shot from any of them if it can be avoided; but I hardly think they will venture to shoot, now that there is a chance, as they view it, of capturing us without."

"Well?"

"Taunt them, if you deem it advisable. Do what you can to egg them on so that they will dash forward as much in a body as possible."

"I begin to understand what you want, I think."

"The thing I want is to get as many of them as possible on the stairs at the same time. That is, I want all of them, if possible, lined along the stairs between the ground floor and this one when I turn on the current. In that case I can hold them all."

"But there will be some of them who are so crowded that they will not be grasping the rail, and therefore will not feel the shock."

"My dear senator, haven't you noticed that there are two strips on the stairs themselves? The men who do not touch the rail with their hands will, in all probability, be standing upon one of the strips; or, if not that, will be touching one of the men who is in contact with the 'live' wire; and, besides, once I get them in the house, the wires run in so many places that I don't think that one of them will escape contact with it."

"What do you suppose is keeping them waiting? Why don't they make the attack?"

It was strange—the silence that had ensued.

"They will come on, in a minute," replied the detective. "They may be awaiting a signal of some sort from the other house; or our passivity may have alarmed them."

"Hark! They are coming again now."

It was true.

A murmur of voices could be heard outside the door; then the shuffling noise of many feet upon the stones outside; then the dull blow made by the impact of the heavy beam against the door itself.

And the door gave way instantly, as Nick knew it would do.

It flew open at the first touch of the heavy beam against it, and as Nick still remained beside the senator, they could both see that half a dozen men at once forced their way into the lower hall.

But they paused there tentatively.

The utter absence of opposition seemed to alarm them greatly. It was evident that they suspected a plot of some kind; it was not unlikely that it might have occurred to them that a bomb had been prepared to receive them.

But the voice of Mustushimi was now heard from the steps outside the house, shouting to his men.

"Forward!" he called to them. "What are you waiting for? Forward!"

Still they hesitated, while others crowded into the hallway until there was a throng there—as many as could stand in the space at the bottom of the stairs, and Nick chuckled to himself, observing it.

That was exactly the condition he had hoped for; exactly the situation he wished, for while those who hesitated continued to stand irresolute, others crowded in behind them, until there was almost a jam in the lower hall.

Two or three had stepped upon the stairs, and were waiting there, undecided what to do, when again the voice of Mustushimi was heard, ordering them onward.

"Forward!" he cried again, still from outside the house. "I will discharge the man who hesitates now! Go on! Go on!"

They obeyed him this time.

With a wild shout, given, no doubt, more to buoy up their own courage than to urge those who were behind, the men in front started rapidly up the stairs, closely followed by the others, and Nick Carter perceived that before the leaders could reach the top the others would be behind them in a dense throng.

"Shout *'now!'* when we are ready for the shock!" he whispered rapidly to the senator; and then he turned and dashed into the room and stood with his hand on the switch, waiting for the word.

The time was short until it came; perhaps five seconds—no more than that; and then——

"Now!" cried the senator.

Instantly Nick threw the switch all the way over, giving them in the beginning the full force of that terrible shock; but as instantly he threw it back again, half-way, so that only half of the awful current remained.

But it was enough.

If you had been listening there, a mere observer of the proceedings, you might have thought that pandemonium had suddenly broken loose in that hallway, and upon the stairs.

A chorus of shrieks that would have done credit to the biggest kind of a madhouse went up from a score of tongues; shrieks of terror and of agony; cries of pain and of fright.

And these were followed by curses and moans; by cries for help and yells of terror, and by the whole gamut of noises that men might make under such conditions.

They can be better imagined than described.

From an almost silent body of men moving up the stairway these were transformed into a horde of madmen who were too greatly terrorized to think, too frightened to guess what had happened, and who were really in too great pain to do more than shout and curse and cry out for help.

Nick left the current as he had switched it on with that second move of his hand, and then sprang to another switchboard where he moved another lever, and thus threw on the electric lights, so that instantly the stairway was flooded with brilliancy.

Then he ran out into the hall, where the senator was clinging to the balustrade, doubled up with laughter by the scene that was enacted before him.

And it was ludicrous—to the observer. It was not at all funny to the victims of the incident.

The men along the stairs, from the bottom to the top, were writhing in all sorts of shapes.

Their bodies and arms and legs were contorted; their faces were drawn and haggard with pain. Their eyes were staring, and strained, and filled with terror.

Some of them had fainted, partly from fright and partly from the force of the shock itself; and these would have fallen to the steps had it not been for the fact that the terrific force of the current held them so that they could not let go their holds.

Down in the lower hall, one man held tightly to the brass knob of the door, and he was struggling and cursing with all his might, in his mad efforts to pull his hands away from the invisible forces that held them, for in trying to release himself he had seized the knob with the other hand, and it now held tightly to both.

And this man, the detective saw at a glance, was Mustushimi himself.

He had doubtless been the last to enter the house, and had perhaps been standing, grasping with one hand the knob of the door, when Nick turned on the current; the result was that he had been held as well as the others, for Nick perceived now that Chick in following out his instructions had builded even better than had been the original intention, and had carried a wire to every bit of metal that could be reached.

The pandemonium of curses and cries was something awful to hear; it is almost as bad to contemplate.

But the noisiest had dwindled to moans now, and Nick could not tell whether they were more frightened than hurt, or whether it was the opposite.

But he knew that his plans had succeeded; he knew that he held every one of the men who had dared to force themselves into that house in search of him; and he knew that they could not escape until he chose to release them.

And then again he looked down upon the chief of them all, still writhing at the door, with his hands grasping the brass knob.

But, even as he looked, a stronger wrench than the others on the part of Mustushimi succeeded, and with a wild cry he tore himself loose, and staggered backward so that he fell to the floor.

But in falling he tumbled through the open doorway, outside it, and alighted on his back on the marble floor without; and then with a scream of agony he leaped to his feet and ran away down the steps outside, with the fleetness of a hare, and as if all the devils in Hades were pursuing him.

Mustushimi, the chief of them all, had succeeded in making his escape, and for a moment the detective considered dashing down that charged stairway in pursuit of him.

Fortunately, however, he thought better of it; but, nevertheless, the leader of the spies had, for the moment at least, made his escape.

CHAPTER IX.

NICK CARTER CAPTURES THE FORTY SPIES.

All this that has been described was, of course, enacted in a very short space of time—much less than it requires to tell it.

Nick knew perfectly well that the men could not withstand a continuance of that awful shock for a very great length of time, and he had prepared himself for the end of it.

There were thick-soled rubber shoes for himself and the senator to don, and there were heavy rubber gloves for their hands, ready beside them; and there was a long rope ready for his uses, also.

He seized that now, after having adjusted the rubber shoes and gloves, and having made one end of the rope fast, he hurried down the stairs, and as he passed each man, he hastily threw two half-hitches of the rope he carried over the head of each man as he passed him.

It did not take him long to arrive at the bottom of the stairs, and here again he made fast the other end of the rope; after which he returned rapidly up the stairs again, and hastened into the room where the switchboard was located.

For a moment he turned the current completely off, and then put it part way on again; just far enough so

that the imprisoned men could feel that there was still a shock passing through their bodies; just enough so that they would not dare to renew their struggles for liberty.

"Now, senator," he called out, "come here, will you?"

The senator went to him, and the detective continued:

"Will you stand here near the switch?"

"Yes."

"If I call out to you, throw the switch over to this notch. That will be far enough. I only want to be assured that not one of those men is going to get away."

"Have you got the chief?" asked the senator.

"No; he escaped, but we will get him, somehow, before morning."

The detective then returned to the stairway, and at the top he stopped a moment, and said to the men he had used so harshly—for already they were beginning to struggle for liberty.

"Stop that struggling, or I will give you the full force of the current again. Stop, I tell you!"

They obeyed at once, for their terror was almost pitiful to behold. And if you stop to think upon it, whose would not be so, under like circumstances?

"Now," continued the detective, "listen to me. I am going to begin at the bottom of the stairs, and tie you, one by one, so that none can escape. If any one of you should make an effort to do so the current will instantly be turned on again, and you will all suffer for the act of that one. Do you understand me? Answer!"

"Yes, yes," came in a chorus of husky voices from the suffering men on the stairs.

"One by one I shall bring you up the stairs to this floor, where you will be still more firmly bound, and presently there will be policemen here to take you away, and to serve you as you deserve—only there may be one or two, or perhaps three among you who may be permitted to escape. We will see about that."

The detective passed down the stairs then, with short pieces of rope that had been provided by Chick. These were thrown over his left arm so that he could reach them readily as he wished to make use of them.

Beginning with the man nearest the bottom of the stairs, the detective drew his hands behind him and fastened them there; then he served the next one in the same way; and then he forced the two to precede him up the stairs, picking their way among the others who were on them, and so conducted them to the room on the second floor, where he compelled them to lie down upon the floor while he bound their ankles together after the same manner.

After that he returned for two others; and so he continued, taking them there to that room in twos, until he had removed the last one from the stairs and had bound them all, as he had served the first two.

"Now turn off the current entirely, senator," he said to his friend.

And then he looked down upon his captives with a grim smile on his face—and counted them.

There were exactly twenty-one in all; and as Nick looked at them they seemed to represent all the nationalities of the globe. There were Chinamen, there were Frenchmen, Germans, Russians, a Turk, an Italian, and so on.

It was indeed a motley crew of spies that Nick Carter had captured; men who had been willing to sell their services for anything, for a price.

"Mustushimi has not confined himself to the use of his own countrymen," said the detective, addressing the senator. "He has brought around him spies, I suppose, from all quarters of the globe."

"So it would seem," replied the senator. And then, unable to hold in any longer, he cried out:

"Nick Carter, I never had so much fun in all my life. I never saw such a show as that one. I wouldn't have missed it for a thousand dollars. The 'Greatest show on earth' is a joke to that one. If Barnum was alive and could get hold of it, your fortune would be made."

"It was funny," assented Nick.

"*Funny!* that word can't express it."

"I don't think that any of these men regarded it as funny, however," said Nick.

"No; I rather guess not. From their standpoint, it must have been terrible."

"It was—at the beginning. But I only gave them the full force of the current for an instant."

"One would suppose that even that would have killed some of them, Carter."

"No. There were too many of them taking it, for one thing. The stronger absorbed some of the shock from the weaker ones. But as it was, three of them fainted, although they came around again, almost at once—as soon as I lessened the shock."

"What are you intending to do now?" asked the senator.

"As soon as these men are sufficiently recovered to reply to my questions, I shall ask a few of them; but in the meantime I must go over to the other house. Do you think, senator, that you can stand guard over these men while I am gone?"

"Sure thing, Carter."

"You are armed?"

"Yes."

"Let them see that you are. That is right. Now, senator, I am going to leave you for a short time."

"All right. You will find us all here, just as you see us now, when you return."

"I haven't a doubt of it. But if there should be any effort on the part of any of them to break away, don't hesitate to hurt them, to keep them quiet."

"Oh, I won't. There won't be any of them who will make a second effort," the senator replied significantly.

The detective left him then, and, descending to the basement of the house, passed out by the rear door, and made his way across to the other house, where Chick and Gordon had been on duty, and where he knew that something must have happened by this time, although he had no means of guessing what it might be.

But midway between the doors of the two houses he encountered Chick, who was on his way to him; and they stopped there in the tiny yard to discuss the events of the night.

"Well?" said the detective quickly, to his assistant. "What has happened on your side of the fence?"

"It's all over," was the smiling reply.

"Did they break into the house?"

"Yes."

"How many of them?"

"Twenty."

"I got one more than you did. We have twenty-one."

"Pretty nearly evened the thing up in making their attack, didn't they, Nick?"

"So it seems. Did Mustushimi, by any chance, go around your way, Chick?"

"No; I haven't seen him."

"He succeeded in getting away from me."

"That is too bad."

"But we will get him, all right, before the night is over, or, at least, early in the day to come. He can't get very far away, and I will make those fellows talk, even if I have to give them the shocks all over again."

"I think, Nick," said the assistant, "that the fellow we captured first—the one that Patsy got for you—will be the best one to question. He confessed that he was second in command to Mustushimi himself. If we had him here, we could make him talk without torturing the others with more current."

"That is perhaps so. What is he? A Jap?"

"No; a Frenchman."

"We will send for him or go to him. Where is Patsy? I haven't seen a sign of him since he struck that fellow, in front of the Arlington."

"Patsy is here. He was standing outside the house when the men made the attack on me, and he came in as soon as they were caught."

"I wonder if he was thoughtful enough to have a conveyance handy anywhere?"

"Yes; there is one outside the door now."

"All right. That is good. Send Patsy for Mustushimi's lieutenant at once. Have him bring the man directly to me."

"All right. I'll attend to it now."

"And, Chick?"

"Yes?"

"There is no telephone in this house behind me. There is one in yours."

"Yes."

"Call up headquarters, and tell them there all that has happened. Ask the major to send around a wagon or two—enough to cart away about forty men. He will be delighted. We ought to get these fellows out of the neighborhood as soon as possible. Tell Patsy to send his carriage around to my door and to come through the houses and speak to me before he goes after the Frenchman."

"All right."

Nick returned then to the senator, and found that conditions had not changed in any way durig his short absence; and presently Patsy appeared, grinning when he looked down upon the crestfallen faces of the captured spies.

"Nice lot, ain't they?" he said. "Gee, chief, but it was funny, from my standpoint. I was just outside the other house while it was all happening. I thought that was the place for me, for I did not know that Chick had Gordon with him, and I did know that the senator was

with you. I thought Chick might need me, when it came to the typing-up act."

"Quite right. Now, Patsy, Chick says that the first man captured—the one you put out of business, is Mustushimi's lieutenant."

"That's correct."

"I want you to go after him and bring him here at once. How long will it take you?"

"Between twenty minutes and half an hour."

"Get him here as soon as you can. I want to make him talk."

"Put you on the track of Mustushimi?"

"Yes. I am not sure that the rank and file of his followers would know where he would be apt to hide; but it is likely that the Frenchman will know. And I am bound to get that man, and at once; else my work is not half done. I'd like to finish it all up to-night, if possible; and I think I will."

CHAPTER X.

NICK CARTER MAKES A MAN TALK.

It was an interesting coincidence that Patsy arrived at the house with his prisoner just a few moments before the police came from headquarters to take the men away, and so it happened that there were six uniformed officers grouped around Nick—to say nothing of his own friends, and of the bound prisoners on the floor—when Mustushimi's lieutenant was brought before him to be questioned.

He was a tall, lithe, clean-limbed, rather swarthy but withal handsome Frenchman. He still showed the mark made by Patsy's fist, and whenever he glanced toward the latter there was an ugly gleam in his eyes, as if he would like nothing better than to have an opportunity of repaying that blow with considerable interest.

"Your name!" demanded the detective curtly; but the fellow smiled at him, and replied:

"Find out, mistaire."

"I will," said Nick. "Senator, hand me the end of that wire you saw me attaching to the switchboard a moment ago. This chap hasn't had a taste of our medicine, as yet. I think he would like some of it. Patsy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take your place at the switchboard. When I say 'One!' move the lever to the third notch. When I say 'Two!' move it to the fourth notch, and, after that, as I count upward, move it one notch at a time until I hold up my hand for you to stop."

"All right, chief."

Nick took the wires in his hand—there were two of them—and one of them he fastened to the Frenchman's left hand, so that the bulb at the end of it was exactly in his palm. The man had to be held while Nick did this, but it was accomplished after a moment; and then the detective stood in front of him with the other wire in his grasp, for it was insulated, of course.

"Now, you Frenchman, attend to me!" he ordered. "What is your name?"

"I have a dozen," was the smiling reply. "I don't know that I particularly object to giving you one of them. You may call me Dumont."

"That will answer very well for the present. Now answer what I shall ask you, and do it clearly, or you shall be made to suffer."

"Perhaps I will answer you, and perhaps I won't. We will see about that," was the impertinent reply.

"Baron Mustushimi is your chief, is he not?"

"I don't know the gentleman," replied the Frenchman.

Nick stepped forward quickly toward him and touched the bulb, at the end of the wire he carried, to the Frenchman's hand, which had been tied beside his body so that he could not use it.

"One!" he called out to Patsy, and the young assistant moved the lever over three notches. Instantly the Frenchman started, and a surprised look of pain came into his eyes; but he controlled himself admirably, and straightened up again as if nothing had happened.

"Answer the question," said Nick sternly.

"I do not know the——"

"Two!" the detective called out, and the lever was moved another notch.

The Frenchman writhed, but remained silent, and after waiting a moment Nick said:

"Three!"

The Frenchman writhed now terribly; the blood rushed to his face, turning it almost to a hue of purple. He gritted his teeth, and he found voice enough to curse roundly.

"Four!" said the detective; and the Frenchman almost screamed out, so suddenly did the additional shock come.

"Five!" counted the detective mercilessly, without waiting this time; and the Frenchman groaned aloud.

"Six! Seven! Eight!"

A wild scream rang through the room. The Frenchman's arms and legs were twisted almost out of shape, and after a second he shrieked:

"*Mercy! Mercy!*"

The detective raised his hand, and instantly Patsy turned off all the current—and the reaction was so great that instantly the Frenchman dropped to the floor, limp and nerveless, and with a loud sigh of intense relief.

Nick Carter waited a moment, and then he asked calmly:

"Are you satisfied, Dumont?"

"Yes; oh, yes."

"You don't care for any more of that, do you?"

"No; oh, no."

"Will you reply to my questions now?"

"Yes."

"Then get upon your feet again. Here, I will help you. There. Now, are you prepared to reply to the questions I shall ask you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Answer the one I asked before, then. Are you in the employ of Baron Mustushimi?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"Two years."

"In this country all the time?"

"No; I have been in Russia most of the time. I have just come here."

"He sent for you?"

"Certainly."

"In what capacity do you serve him?"

"I am his assistant."

"His lieutenant?"

"If you choose to call it so—yes."

"You are literally second in his command, are you not?"

"Yes."

"In his absence, you are chief over the men?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the baron's secrets?"

"I am supposed to know them."

"Do you know where he lives? The place that he calls home, in this city?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"In D Street, southwest."

"Can you direct us so that we will be able to find the house without difficulty?"

"Yes."

"You know that he made his escape when you all entered this house—but, no; I am forgetting. You were nowhere. When your men here entered this house, and were caught by the same sort of electric current that you have just now tested, Baron Mustushimi made his escape. He managed to break away, for he was too great a personal coward to enter the house with his men, and hung in the background so that he only got what came to him through the knob of the door. He got away from it and fled, leaving all his men to suffer while he escaped. Now, I want to know where he was likely to go, to hide himself."

"He has a house in the country—in Virginia."

"I know that, and he knows that I do. I was there once. He will recall the circumstance, and will not go there. Where else?"

"The house in D Street, southwest."

"Do you think he would be likely to go there?"

"More likely than elsewhere, sir."

"Why?"

"Because I think I am the only one of his men who knows about that place."

"Answer, you others! Did any of you know about that house, until you heard this man speak of it just now?"

They replied by a chorus of negatives.

"It is likely, then, that he will go there," said Nick; "unless he stops to recall the fact that you, Dumont, are a prisoner, and are likely to betray him. Where is there another place that he might go?"

"I only know of one."

"Where is that?"

"To the Japanese legation."

"Do you think he would dare go there, under the circumstances?"

"I don't know. When he is frightened he does desperate things—and he is a coward. But I hardly think that the ambassador would consent to receive him. I happen to know that he is not on good terms with the ambassador."

"Perhaps the ambassador doesn't approve of Mustushimi's methods."

"I know that he does not."

"Then it is not likely that he has attempted to go there. I think we will look for him at the house in D Street. Now, Dumont?"

"Yes, sir. I have answered so far, and I might as well now tell you all you wish to know. I suppose I will be allowed my liberty if I do?"

"You will be set free, when I have done with you, providing you leave the country at once."

"I will do that only too gladly."

"Very well. Now reply."

"Yes."

"There are twenty-one of your men in this room, besides yourself. There are twenty more in another house near here. All are prisoners. Now, how many more are there, in Mustushimi's employ, in the city of Washington?"

"He has fifty men in all, now, besides himself and me."

"So there are nine who are still at liberty?"

"Yes; if you have counted those who are prisoners correctly."

"You are sure that there are no more?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is there a place of meeting? A headquarters?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"Across the long bridge, in Virginia. It is a gambling-house, but there is no game there now, and has not been for a long time. That is the meeting-place."

"Don't you think it possible that Mustushimi might have gone there to hide, instead of the house in D Street?"

"It is possible."

"And those other nine men you referred to—do you think it is likely that we would find any of them there, if we should go there at once, in search of them?"

"It is more than likely. They sleep there—most of the men—and Mustushimi drew on the reserves for to-night's work."

The detective turned to the captain of police who was in charge of the uniformed men who were there, and said to him:

"That is all, I think. You may take these men away now, if you will, and ask the major to hold them all for me until I send word from the official who is my authority in this matter. I know that you and your men cannot go to Virginia to make an arrest, and so I shall take the law into my own hands, and trust to luck not to disturb any of those Virginia officials who are at the other end of the long bridge. My own friends will accompany me, if you will take charge of the prisoners. Tell the major to expect me at any moment."

CHAPTER XI.

NICK CARTER SWINGS THE AX.

Nick Carter and the senator, with Chick and Patsy, entered the carriage at the door, a few moments later, leaving the house and the prisoners in charge of the officers, and were driven rapidly toward D Street, southwest, for Nick had determined to stop at the house Dumont had mentioned, while on his way to the long bridge. It was almost directly in his course, and it would consume only a little time to do so. If Mustushimi were there, so much the better. The rest would be comparatively easy.

That neighborhood of the Capital city does not bear a savory reputation, and it was just the place of all others, for Mustushimi to have selected as a place for hiding, if he should be pursued too closely at any time; and the house and its location were so perfectly described to the detective by Dumont, before they separated, that Nick knew he could find it with ease.

It was a low, two-story brick house, painted white; and there were lace curtains at the windows and lights behind some of them, so that it did not appear unlike its neighbors in that locality—notwithstanding the fact that the time was now two in the morning.

As the hack drew up in front of the door, the detective leaped down and rang the bell; and after a moment's delay a negro appeared and looked at him through a narrow crack.

But Nick slammed the door open instantly, sending the negro sprawling upon his back; then he seized him by the collar, and stood him on his feet before he could recover from his surprise.

"Where is your master?" demanded the detective.

"He's done gone out, sah," was the trembling reply.

"I am referring to the Japanese baron—Mustushimi, by name."

"Yassir; dat's my marster, sho' 'nuff."

"Are you telling the truth when you say that he has gone out?"

"I shore is, sah. I shore is."

"Where has he gone?"

"I specs, sah, 'cross de ribber."

"The long bridge."

"Yassir."

"How long has he been gone away from here?"

"Well, sah, it cayn't be mo' dan an houah; it cayn't nohow, sah."

"Was he alone?"

"Yassir."

"Did he say anything to you about returning before he left?"

"He done say'd, sah, dat he couldn't come back yar befo' to-morrow, nohow. Dat's all."

"I wonder if you are telling me the truth, nigger?"

"Yas, sah, I is."

"Are you alone in the house now, or are there others here?"

"I's alone, sah. Dere ain't nobody here, nohow."

"Don't you know the house to which your master has gone, nigger?"

"Yassir, I does."

"What house is it?" Nick wished to have confirmation, if possible, regarding what Dumont had told him.

"It done used to be a gamblin'-house, sah, jes' on de oder side ob de ribbuh. Dat's de house, sah, where all dem men meets to talk and say cuss words, sah. It's on de lef' han' jes' as you cross de bridge, sah."

"I know where it is, if that is the one."

"Dat's de one, sah, shore 'nuff."

"All right, my man. I guess I'll take your word for it. But I want you to stay right here at this house till I return, and if it should so happen that your master should return in the meantime, I don't want you to tell him anything about this call. Do you understand?"

"I does, sah."

"Will you keep your mouth shut?"

"I will, sah."

"If he should come back here before I return, and you should tell him that I have been here and that I am coming back again, it will be a prison for yours. Do you understand?"

"I does, sah. I'll be as mum as an oyster, sah. I won't speak about you, nohow."

"I'll pay you well if you serve me, nigger; and I'll make you sorry if you don't."

With that the detective turned away and reentered the hack, and then it was driven rapidly away again, toward the long bridge and out upon it, and finally across the river to the Virginia shore.

"You don't suppose that nigger was fooling you all the time, do you, Carter?" the senator asked, as soon as the detective reentered the hack.

"No. I think he was telling the truth. I know a lot about niggers, and I think I can tell the difference between a good one and a bad one. That one happened to be what I call a good nigger, and he spoke the truth."

"All the same it seems to me that it would have been a good idea to search the house before you left it. If Mustushimi——"

"Mustushimi was not there. The nigger spoke the truth. And, anyhow, I did not feel like sparing the time. We have lingered almost too long as it is."

"Why?"

"I am afraid that Mustushimi has got some 'getaway' planned out, and all ready for instant use. If he has, it is located at the old gambling-house, and he will be gone by the time we get there."

"But you can trail him. You never fail in a matter of that kind."

"All the same, I would a whole lot rather find him there now. It would save a heap of trouble; and, besides, I have set my heart on finishing this case before dawn."

"What do you suppose Mustushimi went to that house for, anyway?"

"To warn the others to skip; to get some money that he had cached there; to do any one of a hundred things that he might have wished to do before leaving the community—and to leave it as quickly as possible, is what he intends to do now. He has suddenly made up his mind quite finally that this is not a healthy locality for him."

"I don't blame him for that. Not in the least. But if you are so sure that he is going to skip, why don't you let him go, and have done with it? The President will turn him loose anyhow, won't he?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you let him skip, then?"

"You forget that I promised that I would produce the man before my employer—and I intend to keep my word in that particular, just as I do in all others."

"There are four of us. We will have ten men to tackle. I wonder if they will fight?"

"If you'd like to get out and return, senator——"

"Carter, you know me better than that."

"Of course I do, senator. Pardon me."

"I wonder if they will fight?"

"Very likely; athough I don't really think there is much fight in Mustushimi at any time. He is a coward."

"But the others? The remaining nine?"

"They may put up a fight. It is very likely that they will do so. They will know that they are on Virginia

ground and out of the jurisdiction of Washington. They have probably counted on that very thing in selecting that place for their rendezvous. There are notorious delays of the laws in some parts of Virginia—they know that, too, probably."

"Maybe they will have skipped, all of them, before we get there."

"That is the only thing I fear now; but they cannot suspect they will be overtaken quite so soon. My principal hope lies in the idea that they will not have taken their departure as yet, although they will be getting ready to do so."

"You cannot arrest men for being mere spies, can you?"

"As a matter of fact, I have no right to arrest any of them, within the State of Virginia, to-night. But I'm going to take the right, if I find them there."

"It will be a grand haul if you get all of them, Carter. You will have captured every one of the band, without one escaping, and have done it all within a few hours."

"That is what I hope to do, senator. That is the sort of thing that will frighten this sort of business out of the United States. We don't want any spy systems here. There is no room for such things. We have no intrigues in our country, but if once you permitted a spy system to creep in, and flourish, it wouldn't be long before we would have as many intrigues in Washington as they have at foreign courts. And they are deadly things for any country."

"I can well believe that."

"Such is the view that the President takes of the matter. He doesn't want any noise made about this affair. He wishes it all hushed up effectually; but he wants the persons who are concerned in it so thoroughly frightened that in the future they will give this country a wide berth. Spy systems are all right for Paris, or St. Petersburg, or Vienna, or for any of the foreign capitals, I suppose, but they won't go here."

"'Nohow,' as the nigger said, eh?"

"No; they won't go here, nohow. We have had enough of it already."

They were approaching the end of the bridge now, and the senator pointed ahead of them.

"Is that the building?" he asked.

"No. It is just beyond. We will be there in a moment. You are all to remain quiet while I take the initiative in whatever happens."

"All right, Carter. You're the captain. I wonder that you didn't bring Gordon with you."

"I wanted Gordon to remain with the prisoners. I gave him some messages for the major."

Presently the detective signaled for the driver to stop, and they all got out of the hack and went forward cautiously on foot, approaching the house in question by keeping as much in the shadow as possible.

It was noticeably dark and silent as they approached it, but that argued nothing, for the place was arranged so that no light from the interior could steal outside. Gambling-houses always are, in this part of the world.

Entrance to this particular house is had by means of a flight of wooden stairs or steps which ascend outside the building, on the landward side of it, to a platform at the top; and beyond that is a wide door which gives upon the gambling-room. This was now closed—that is, for gambling purposes, as the detective knew.

But it would be in that part of the house where the men, if they were there, must be found; for from that room the "getaways" are arranged, so that whenever the Virginia authorities bestir themselves enough to pretend to "pull" the place—which does happen sometimes—the gamblers will have no difficulty in making their escape, and in taking with them the expensive parts of their layout.

Nick knew about these "getaways," and so before ascending the stairs referred to, he sent Chick and the senator around to other parts of the building, keeping Patsy with him.

"You know about those 'getaways,' Chick," he said, before they separated. "Take the senator with you, and guard them. There are only two. If you can get through either of them, do so, and be prepared to meet me on the second floor, for I am going to smash the door in without a warning;" and then they noticed for the first time that the detective carried an ax in his right hand.

Followed by Patsy, he crept silently up the stairs to the top and then they tiptoed their way across the platform to the door beyond it; and here the detective paused a moment, to put his ear against the door and listen.

"They are there," he whispered to Patsy. "I can hear them. Now. Ready!"

And he brought the ax down with all his strength, and with a resounding crash against the door, smashing it in with the first blow.

CHAPTER XII.

NICK CARTER KEEPS HIS PROMISE TO THE PRESIDENT.

The first blow smashed the door loose on its fastenings; the second one sent it clattering to the floor, and the detective, still with the ax in his grasp, leaped across the open space, and into the anteroom beyond.

Here, another door—a much less substantial one—gave upon the gambling room proper, and another blow of the ax against that one sent it crashing into the room so that it fell several feet away from them and the opening disclosed a group of men who had started to their feet, with frightened faces, and terrorized demeanor—for the crashing of the two doors had followed one upon the other so closely that they had not had time to do anything.

The room was brilliantly alight, notwithstanding the gloom without—and it was evident at a glance that the attacking party had arrived on the scene none too soon, for the men had made every preparation for leaving.

On the tables around them was such baggage as they possessed, showing that they had made ready to take everything away with them, and to leave nothing which might betray the late uses to which the gambling-house had been put.

Nick also discovered in that first view he had of the interior of the place, that Dumont had spoken the truth.

There was exactly ten men there, and one of them—he who now shrank to the background—was Mustushimi himself, showing his teeth in a snarl of abject fear, and realizing that he was caught at last.

It was plain also that the men who were surprised almost out of their wits, expected that they were attacked by a large force, and did not dream that the two who leaped into the room were the only ones they had to fear for the moment; and when, an instant later Chick appeared, followed by the senator, and appeared, too, from the rear room where luncheon is sometimes served, they seemed certain of this view.

Without hesitation they threw up their hands, and stood there trembling, not knowing what was to happen next, for Mustushimi had just been relating to them the awful experiences in the house in the northeast section of the city, where he said he had been almost killed by electricity.

These men did not know that there was not some such arrangement prepared for them, and they cowered down fearfully.

Spies of that sort are rarely brave men, and these certainly were not.

"Hands up!" ordered the detective, sternly; and they obeyed him to a man, for it did not occur to them to fight. They did not doubt that there were half a hundred other men ready to throw themselves upon them at the least resistance.

"Now, Chick," continued the detective, when he had seen that they obeyed him, "have you got those ropes ready?"

"I have."

"Use them, then. Bind the lot. Tie them so that there will be no getting away. Tie their hands behind them. Patsy, you help."

The work of tying them began at once, and then it was that Nick discovered Mustushimi, as he tried to slink toward the door that gave him an opportunity to escape.

Nick started toward him, when with a snarl the Jap turned upon him, and leaped at his throat like a cat, and he had succeeded in producing a long and gleaming knife from some concealed place in his clothing.

But Nick, with a kick, sent the knife flying across the room, and then as Mustushimi tried to make use of one of his ju jutsu tricks on the detective, he found himself met by another, and the next instant he was sent whirling across the room like a veritable wheel in the air, and his head and shoulders struck against the wall so that he fell to the floor almost senseless.

The moment he touched it, Nick was upon him, and Baron Mustushimi—if he was a baron, which has since been denied by his countrymen—speedily found himself with irons on his wrists and ankles, and one of his own handkerchiefs tied firmly in his mouth, for he began to yell in a most cowardly way the moment he found that he was caught.

A little later, when the men were all tied, and when everything was in readiness, there was a procession formed, which marched slowly across the bridge, which is more than a mile long, toward Washington; and there was a rope which stretched from man to man along the line, so that none of them could break away and attempt to make a run for it.

The procession was followed by the hack, with Nick Carter seated upon the box beside the driver, and with his three friends inside of it, all keeping careful watch of the prisoners, who were obliged to walk.

And so, presently, they entered the city of Washington;

but the hour was still so early that by following the back streets, they attracted no attention, and so they finally made their way across the city, and to the northwest section, where, not far from the National Hotel, the headquarters of police is situated.

At headquarters, Nick and the major in command retired to the private room of the latter, and there Baron Mustushimi was put through an examination which in New York City would be called the "Third Degree."

Anyhow it was sufficiently severe; and the baron, who supposed, by remaining in the country after having once been ordered out of it, that he had forfeited his life, cringed in abject fear, and was ready enough to tell all that the detective demanded of him, when once he was assured that, if he did so, his life would be spared.

But he was not promised his liberty.

Nick preferred that the President should give him that, if he chose to do so, and in his own inimitable way.

But Mustushimi gave up all he knew.

He told of the organization of his spy system throughout the country, to the utmost detail; how there were hundreds of his men, under another lieutenant, in San Francisco, and in other cities of the country, and he related all the secrets about them, where their meeting-places were located, and how they could best be captured.

And he confessed—which was more important—that his government had nothing whatever to do with this movement, but that it was inaugurated and carried on by a political set at home, who were enemies to the Japanese Government, and who really sought to overthrow it.

It was half-past ten o'clock the following morning when Nick Carter drove to the White House in a closed hack, with Mustushimi beside him. He had already sent the word agreed upon between him and the President, ahead of him, so he was sure of instant reception.

And when they arrived, and were taken to the President's room for the audience, they found him awaiting them, standing as he had done before, at the door, and entering the room after them.

The great man nodded and smiled toward the detective, but addressed himself at once to the prisoner.

"You did not choose to obey the order I gave you before, to leave the country, baron," he said coldly; and oh, how coldly he can speak when he wishes to do so. The mere sound of his voice at such a time sends a chill down the spine of a listener.

Mustushimi did not reply. What was there for him to say?

"What shall I do with you now?" he continued, after a short pause.

"I pray you, sir, give me permission to kill myself," pleaded the man, who found his voice at last.

"No. I will not do that. Mr. Carter," he added, turning to the detective, "what shall I do with this man?"

"I would suggest, Mr. President," replied the detective, "that you inform the Japanese ambassador of all the facts in my possession, and turn this man over to him. Permit him to do with him as he pleases."

"Do you think, Mr. Carter, that such a course would be wise, under all the circumstances?"

"I think, sir, that it would be most wise."

"Then it shall be done. I feel that you know whereof you speak, and that therefore there are things connected with this case that I know nothing about. If you say it shall be the ambassador, it shall be so."

"Oh, no, no, no, no!" cried out Mustushimi; but Nick silenced him, and then again addressing the President, he said:

"The government of Japan has had nothing to do with this affair, sir."

"I have never really supposed that it had," was the calm reply. "We are on too good terms for it to do so."

"Mustushimi is the mere instrument of a political party that is inimical to his own government, and I think he has information which the ambassador would like to possess."

"Then to the ambassador he shall go. Will you undertake to conduct him there, with a letter that I shall give you, Mr. Carter?"

"I certainly will, sir."

"Then do so. I will write the letter at once;" and the President seated himself at the table to do so.

"Do not send me there. I will be tortured if you do," cried out the baron; but they who listened pretended not to hear, and a half-hour later Nick Carter left the White House again, with Mustushimi beside him, and rode to the Japanese legation. And there he left him.

Before the detective left the White House, the President motioned him aside, and grasping him cordially by the hand, said:

"Mr. Carter, I am under great obligations to you. Good-by."

THE END.

The next number (564) will contain "The Last of Mustushimi; or, Nick Carter's Narrowest Escape."

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TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

Candy boxes for the holiday trade will be more elaborate than ever. This is saying a great deal, in view of the fact that there has been a steady elaboration of the candy packages.

The practical and ornamental is being combined, however, in the selection of the receptacles for chocolates and bonbons. A popular package is one that can be used by the ladies for a glove-box, or pin-cushion, or other purposes on the dresser, after the candy has been taken out of it.

The highest priced boxes are used more for raffles and prizes than anything else, but $15 is often paid for a box of candy.

Snapshot photographs are constantly adding valuable facts to the stores of science. They are able to detect and analyze motions too quick for the eye to follow. A recent instance of the application of photography to a disputed question in natural history is an experiment made on a vessel from British Columbia to San Francisco, one of the passengers thereon being a scientist in the employ of Uncle Sam.

A large albatross had been following the steamer, and keeping pace with it for several hours, and the wonder grew among the watchers on shipboard as to how the bird was able to fly so swiftly, while apparently keeping its wings extended without flapping them. As this is a common manner of flight with the albatross, the explanation has been offered that the bird takes advantage of slight winds and air-currents, and so is able to glide upon what might be called atmospheric slopes.

As the albatross sailed alongside of the ship, about fifteen feet away, the scientist snapped his camera at it, and obtained a photograph which astonished him and his fellow passengers.

The photograph revealed what no eye had caught, the wings of the albatross, each some five feet long, raised high above its back in the act of making a downward stroke. The explanation naturally suggested is that more or less frequently the bird must have made a stroke of this kind with its wings, although the eye could not detect the motion, and that the camera chanced to be snapped just at the right moment.

A remarkable discovery of a hoard of gold and silver coins, amounting in value to about £300, has been made in the townland of Annaloughey, near Aughcloy, County Tyrone, Ireland. The money was discovered hidden in an old well beside the house which has been the property of one family for generations.

The back of the wall at one time formed a portion of the original house. How or when the hoard was placed in position where it was discovered is a mystery, but from the dates on the coins it must have been at least half a century ago.

When the steamship *Arabia* arrived at Tilbury, Eng., recently, four cases of undistinguished appearance were handed over to four men employed by tourist-agents. Each man guarded his case with particular care, never releasing his hold upon it during the train journey to town.

On arrival at Liverpool Street station, the four men, each hugging his charge, entered a van, sat on their cases, and were driven to Ludgate Circus, where the cases were immediately consigned to the safes.

The mysterious boxes contained the hereditary jewels of the Maharajah of Bikaneer, who arrived in London a short time ago. The jewels, which are valued at about £25,000, were guarded in India by an armed escort.

ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS.

CHAPTER I.

WHO IS BLACK BEN?

"I really think it was just the neatest thing that I ever did in that line," said the grizzled old Captain Gapsill.

"To what do you allude?" I inquired, knowing that I was about to hear something interesting.

"That little affair I had with Black Ben."

"Black Ben? Who is he?"

"Hain't you ever heard tell of him?" demanded the captain in amazement; and then recollecting himself, he added: "I forgot; that was before your time—at least you must have been quite a younker then. Black Ben, next to Mike Fink, was one of the greatest pirates that ever infested the Mississippi."

"What became of him?"

"I was going to tell you. In the first place, you mustn't imagine he was a negro because he was called Black Ben. He had a skin as dark as a mulatto's, and a fearful lot of

great, black, bushy hair, which stood up like bristles; and, as he always went without a hat, I can tell you he was just about the most villainous-looking creature you ever saw. Besides that, he had jet-black whiskers, short and sticking out like needles, and growing up almost to his eyes; so when you looked at him you saw about a bushel of black, bristling hair, and in the midst his great eyes glowing like coals of fire. He wasn't more than five feet in height; he had short legs, very long arms, and immense muscular power. He generally went dressed as a backwoodsman, and had two comrades—ordinary-looking men, but as bloody and merciless cutthroats as he.

"Black Ben had been seen as far up as Cairo, and as low down as Natchez. He was such a queer-looking creature that it was impossible for him to disguise himself enough to go among the towns, or where he would have run any danger. His principal hunting-ground was from the mouth of the Arkansas north to the Tennessee line. Here he had all the opportunity he wished for hiding himself, and I don't believe a party of red Indians ever could have hunted him to his hole. If he hadn't met his fate in the queer manner he did, he might have hunted there until he died of old age.

"In those days a great many flatboats used to pass down the Mississippi on their way to New Orleans, and these were the favorite prey of Black Ben and his men. As the river navigation, with its snags and sawyers, is always so dangerous, these boats often lay to under the bank during the night, when the chances are ten to one that the sharp eyes of the pirates detected them, and, at the dead hour of midnight, they stole out as silently as shadows, crept over the boat, cut the throats of the unsuspicious sleepers, gutted the craft, then scuttled it and set it afloat. Out in the deep water, it would sink, and that would be the last ever seen or heard of that flatboat.

"Black Ben was a horrid dog, and it was no wonder that there was such terror of him all along the river. Captain Hallongton, an old friend of mine, had his boat served in this manner, but the night was so dark that he managed to swim off, although his three men were every one of them murdered. The captain had a hard story to tell, and he offered five hundred dollars to any one who would shoot this bloody cutthroat.

"I had been from Cincinnati down to New Orleans fully a dozen times without once encountering this redoubtable Blue Beard. I had lain to at a place where, it was said, he would be sure to find us; but never once did we catch sight or sound of him, and I would have doubted his existence but for the testimony of Captain Hallongton and his friends, whom I could not refuse to believe.

"'It is strange that I never meet him,' I once said, when he and I were conversing together regarding this river outlaw. 'It must be that he is either afraid of me, or else has a feeling of friendship toward me.'

"'Don't congratulate yourself too soon,' replied my friend. 'Depend upon it, Black Ben will yet pay you a visit.'

"'I have heard so much of him, that I must say my curiosity is really greater than my terror.'

"'See here!' interrupted the captain, starting up in sudden excitement; 'you're going to start down the river next week?'

"'A week from to-morrow.'

"'Good! You take Dick and Tom, your usual help?'

"'Of course.'

"'I ship with you as a common hand, just on purpose to help you to a sight of Black Ben. What do you say?'

"The proposition struck me very favorably, and I urged the captain to it. As he was ten times as rich as I was, I didn't exactly like the idea of his going as a common hand, although on my flatboat there was no other position for him. It was finally agreed that he should pass himself as one of my assistants; but as there was no need of his work, he was to do little more than dress himself as such, to deceive any one whom we might encounter while he might accommodate the labor to himself.

"We made all our arrangements as if certain of encountering this fellow. We went more fully armed than we ever did before, and it was agreed that when we reached that part of the river where we had reason to expect the appearance of Black Ben, or where there was the least likelihood of his seeing us, that nobody should show themselves above deck except Captain Hallongton and myself. This was for the purpose of making the pirate believe there were only two of us on board, and thus luring him on to what we hoped would be his destruction.

"Well, we swung loose from Cincinnati one fine morning, and in due time reached the Mississippi, and lay to at Memphis, Tennessee, one stormy night, where we fixed everything to our satisfaction. When we started next morning, Tom and Dick were sent down below in the cabin with the understanding that they were not to show themselves until they had permission to do so.

"It was late in the autumn of 1838, and I remember that the weather was quite chilly, so much so that both Hallongton and myself kept on our overcoats all the time. We passed to and fro, plainly showing ourselves to any one who might be along the bank. Tom and Dick were allowed to come up only when the night was dark, and then they exchanged places with us so that under no circumstances were more than two of us visible at the same time.

"Down below Helena on the Arkansas side, we had fixed as the place where we might reasonably look for the appearance. There was a long stretch of wood country, where the wretch's most inhuman deeds had been located.

"It was a cold, blustering night that we worked our boat under the wooded shore and made fast to the identical spot, where my friend had had his memorable adventure with Black Ben. He recognized it by several landmarks, and assured me that we would hear from the gentleman before many hours had passed over our heads.

"For the last few miles, before tyin' up, we had kept up a sharp scrutiny of the shores in the hope of detecting some signs of the outlaws. I saw nothing; but Hallongton was positive he caught several glimpses of a man flitting along the Arkansas bank, and maintaining a sharp watch upon our movements.

"After we had securely tied up our boat, we went below, after our supper, and then made our final arrangements. I should state here that my flatboat was one made after a fashion of my own. It was long and quite narrow, the cabin being, as usual, in the rear. This was made of double thick planking, immediately adjoining the cargo, which stretched away to the bow. A small orifice had been bored through this planking, so that one in the cabin could talk in a whisper to one who was in the main body of the boat among our cargo of pork. This was

done at the suggestion of Captain Hallongton, in accordance with a plan which we had formed between us.

"When it was fully dark, Tom and Dick crept carefully over the cabin, in among the pork, and took their position near the hole which I have just mentioned. When we had chatted together awhile, Hallongton did the same, while I maintained my place near the cabin.

"We were so close under the bank that a long limb hung directly over the cabin.

"As it looked quite thick and strong, I grasped it with my hands, and swung myself upon it. The next moment I had climbed to the top of the tree and seated myself near the trunk astride of a large limb, where I patiently awaited whatever was to come.

"Our plans were fully agreed upon, and I knew that I might have sat there until morning without hearing a word from them, or detecting an impatient movement upon their part.

"The night for a time was pitchy dark, but the moon soon came up over the river, shedding a light which made the opposite shore visible, and gave me a little uneasiness as to whether I would not be detected from the ground below. However, as our line of action had been agreed upon, it was now too late for us to make any change in out part of the program.

"I was speculating on these matters, when a slight noise below attracted my attention, and looking down I could discern a dark body, moving cautiously toward the boat. In the shadow of the wood, the gloom was too great to make out its identity; but, while I was looking, it leaped as lightly and dexterously as a monkey upon the gunwale, and the next minute I saw that Black Ben was on the flatboat.

"In the bright moonlight, he was plainly visible, and answered perfectly the description which I have given. He circled around the boat with the silence of a phantom, and finally halted near the cabin and listened as if to hear the breathing of those within. Having finished his reconnaissance, he sprang lightly ashore and disappeared.

"I had seen no one but Black Ben, but a slight noise heard when he was on the boat, satisfied me that he had one companion at least with him, and I was sure that he would speedily return.

"I was now anxious to hear whether Captain Hallongton had seen the pirate, and whether he was 'posted.'

"To satisfy myself, I gave a low whistle. It was immediately replied to—a fact which convinced me that my friends were 'all right.'

"It was plain that Black Ben had no suspicion of the little plan which we had concocted for his benefit; but whether that same little plan of ours would miscarry or not was another question, for we knew that the outlaw was a desperate character, who would play the mischief if he should ever get into close quarters.

"Now came a period of watching and waiting, continued so long that I had great fear that Black Ben had scented danger and concluded to give us a wide berth. Fully two hours passed away with me shivering and cramped in the tree; but I had resolved to stay there until morning if the outlaw did not make his appearance before that time.

"It could not have been far from midnight when I caught the rustling of bushes beneath me, and I felt sure that Black Ben was there; but, as I peered down, I was disappointed in discerning not a man, but a large black bear that was lumbering along the shore and awkwardly approaching the flatboat. Reaching it, he waded into the water, snuffed around the boat, poked his nose against it, struck his paws against it, and made a racket which struck me as singular upon the part of a bear.

"'I would soon stop your sport,' I reflected, 'if I were not watching for bigger game.'

"I was watching the brute, when something in his manner of moving about attracted my suspicion, and I scanned him more narrowly that I had yet done. My heart gave a great leap as I penetrated the ruse, and discovered that instead of the object under me being a bear, it was only a man disguised as such. His object in making such a tumult around the boat was evidently to learn whether the men on board were asleep.

CHAPTER II.

"WE'VE GOT HIM!"

Occasionally the creature paused and was perfectly still, as if listening; but nothing but the sullen surging of the muddy Mississippi, or the dipping of some overhanging branch was heard, and becoming satisfied that everything was in the shape desired, the bear withdrew from the water, and tumbled away into the wood, in a style which he hardly would have dared to use had he been aware that a pair of eyes were intently scrutinizing his every movement.

"A half-hour later, a form sprang from the dark line of wood which lined the shore, landing on the gunwale of the boat at a single bound. One glance was sufficient for me to see that Black Ben had boarded the *General Jackson,* and that the critical moment was at hand.

"The hideous looking creature glided as swiftly and silently as a shadow from one part of the boat to the other in order to assure himself that no one was watching in any of the out-of-the-way places. He then glided back to the cabin and made a single motion with his arm. The response was in the shape of another dark form, which leaped beside him with all the agility of a monkey.

"From where I sat I had both of these precious scamps in range, and I could have sent a bullet crashing through both of them; but, as that was not the plan agreed upon, I concluded to wait.

"As I had always understood that Black Ben was accompanied by two men, I looked for the appearance of his companion, but, as the bushy-headed chief turned his back upon the shore the instant he was joined by his friend, I supposed that he was absent, and would not appear in this matter, which pleased me greatly, as it could but make the matter all the more easy for us.

"The two villains put their heads together and seemed to converse awhile in the same manner that you frequently see horses or cows do. Agreeing upon their course of action, Black Ben quietly drew back the slide which covered the door which communicated with the cabin. Flashing a sort of bull's-eye lantern down into the gloom, he leaned his head forward and scanned every part of the cabin.

"And I know what he saw. What were apparently two human forms wrapped up in their blankets and sound asleep. The next instant the sharp report of two pistols in immediate succession broke the stillness, and Black Ben and his comrade sprang down into the cabin.

"Just what we wanted. Hardly a second had elapsed

when I was on deck, and had slid the door back to its place, at the same moment that Captain Hallongton and Tom and Dick hurriedly clambered up beside me.

"'We've got 'em!' exclaimed the captain delightedly. 'Be quick and fasten that down.'

"Everything had been prepared for such a dénouement as this, and not ten seconds passed ere we had Black Ben and his friend firmly imprisoned.

"The next proceeding of Captain Hallongton was to dance a double shuffle upon the deck and exclaim, 'We've got him! We've got him!'

"'Keep still,' I said; 'you act like a crazy man.'

"'Do you know there is a thousand dollars offered for his head in New Orleans?' said he.

"I didn't know that, and I felt somewhat like making as big a fool of myself over it, but I did not.

"The next thing we heard was a terrible rumpus below—swearing and yelling enough to raise the hair on your head. But what cared we? We had the mighty river pirate, Black Ben, and one of his comrades in our power.

"Not knowing but what some of his friends might be in the neighborhood, we untied the fastenings of the boat and swung out into the stream. We ran considerable risk in so doing, as this was a dangerous part of the river, but Captain Hallongton understood the current better than I did, and we decided that this was the safest and best thing that we could do under the circumstances.

"The tempest and tumult continued below until we were in the middle of the Mississippi and gliding rapidly down the stream. Then a silence came, and Black Ben called up to us and asked us what this all meant. We told him that we had caught him trespassing on our boat and intended to take him down to New Orleans and sell him. The answer to this was a couple of pistol shots fired at the spot where he supposed I was standing. It struck beneath my feet, and no doubt he imagined it would pass through the planking and kill me; but it was bullet-proof, and there was no danger. Finding he could do no harm, he took a different course of action. He tried to bribe us to let him go, and made us repeated offers until he reached a figure as high as ten thousand dollars. We told him we would take time to think about it, but we were not quite fools enough to accept any offer which he could make. We knew that all he wanted was to get out on deck, and then there would be the tallest kind of a rumpus. Our only safety was in keeping him just where he was and not give him the slightest advantage.

"Finding his efforts in this direction useless, he fell upon his first plan, of swearing. I have heard some terrible profanity in my time, but I don't think I ever heard anything to equal that of Black Ben. He kept it up until morning, and then all was still again.

"I suppose you understand the way in which we trapped our bird? Captain Hallongton had taken the trouble of finding out Black Ben's manner of doing business and had laid his plans accordingly. It was his custom to wait until the crew of the boats he intended to rob went asleep, and he then stole aboard and quietly dispatched them either with the knife or pistol. Knowing this, we had arranged a couple of dummies, which, as we intended, were mistaken by the river pirate for the entire crew of the *General Jackson*. The small orifice which I first spoke of as connecting the cabin with the main body of the boat, had been made by Captain Hallongton, so that in case there was parley between him and Black Ben before surrendering the boat, the latter personage could thus be made to believe that it came from one of the forms inside; but his coarse of action rendered this precaution unnecessary.

"We ran a great deal more danger in capturing this renowned outlaw than any of us imagined. We had carefully removed everything in the shape of a knife or hatchet, or any kind of weapon from the cabin, and yet we had every reason to believe that both of these dogs would have their knives with them; but by a purely providential circumstance, neither of them carried anything with them except their pistols. How it came about, I cannot say, for it certainly was odd. Had either of them their knives, it would have taken them but a few hours to cut their way through the planking, thick as it was, and we would have been compelled to shoot them to save ourselves from being shot.

"If they had become satisfied that there was no hope for them, the next thing in order would have been the bottom of the boat. They would have made a leak which would have carried themselves and the flatboat to the bottom, and likely enough ourselves, too, for you must know it is no easy matter to make your way through the Mississippi at high water.

"We did not feel easy when we heard them thumping and rubbing the side of the boat, for we were well aware what wonderful things these desperate characters do when they find themselves in such desperate straits.

"Captain Hallongton stood with his loaded rifle, expecting almost every moment to see Black Ben burst out to view like a raging fury. By placing our ears against the cabin we could hear a peculiar, grinding noise, which told us that the gentlemen in there were doing something, although what it was we could only guess. We could hear them muttering and talking to each other, but I could not catch any of the words uttered.

"Toward the close of the second day, just as we came within sight of the Crescent City, two pistol shots broke the stillness. We could only conjecture what it meant. My supposition was that they had shot themselves, but Captain Hallongton suspected it was only a stratagem to get us to open the cabin door to give them a final chance of escape, or an opportunity to put a bullet through some of us who might look down. So we paid no heed, but kept on floating down the river.

"When we had tied up at the wharf, we brought a number of police officers, acquainted them with our prize, surrounded the boat, and then removed the door of the cabin. We waited a long time, but no one came forth, nor did any sound betray the presence of the men within. At last, one of the officers, more venturesome than the rest, ventured to steal up to the cabin and look down. The next instant he uttered a shout and sprang down, while we rushed toward the cabin.

"One glance showed all. Black Ben and his comrade had both shot themselves, and were stone dead. They had no knives, as I said, but with their simple pistol barrels they had almost cut their way through the planking. I do believe that if New Orleans had been a hundred miles further off, these two precious scamps would have got out of the cabin and, perhaps, effected their escape.

"However, we had the satisfaction of receiving one thousand dollars reward, and of knowing that we had cleared the Mississippi of one of the most desperate outlaws that ever infested its banks."

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